HISTORY OF IRELAND

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History of Ireland

HALF-VOLUME I

EXAMPLES FROM THE BOOK OF KELLS

HISTORY OF IRELAND

FROM THE EARLIEST TIMES TO THE PRESENT DAY

BY

THE REV. E. A. D'ALTON
LL.D. M.R.I.A.

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PREFACE TO SECOND EDITION

IT is an old story and a true one that Irishmen have not studied and do not study the history of their own country. The omission to do so was intelligible in the past, when such study was proscribed, and when the rhymer and the story-teller were equally banned by law. But those days are past, and while there is little encouragement given to the study of Irish history as compared with other branches of knowledge, there is at least no prohibition. Irishmen may learn its facts if they will; but they are not willing, and there are few countries in the world where the people are so ignorant of their country's history. For the mass of the people the rath and mound and dun have no significance; and the old Norman castle and the roofless abbey, under the shadow of which the dead take their rest, are heedlessly passed by, and nothing is known of the story which they tell. Even those writers and speakers who sometimes dwell upon the past, and call back the heroes of their nation from the land of shadows, do not speak or write from out the fulness of knowledge. On the contrary, their knowledge is often misty and dim, and they are ignorant of many things in the lives of those very men whose memories they invoke.

This ignorance of a subject which every Irishman should take pains to know is often attributed, in part at least, to the character of the histories that have been written, and, without injustice, it may be admitted that they leave much to be desired. Nor need this be a matter for surprise. So many of the facts

of Irish history are controverted, so many distorted by prejudice or interest, round so many events such fierce passions have played, that to discover the exact truth and to be courageous enough to tell it is not so easy as it may seem. Belonging to one or other of the parties or creeds that have been in such bitter conflict, the historians on both sides have inherited and felt the animosities of their ancestors, and forgetting that their duty was to tell the truth, they have degenerated into advocates and partisans, and in their pages the envenomed contests of the past are repeated and renewed.

This volume is not written on these lines. It is hoped it will be found accurate. Amid discouragements and difficulties which some of my readers will understand, no pains have been spared to discover the truth, and when discovered it has been told. There is neither interpolation nor suppression; as nothing is added, nothing is concealed. I hope it will also be found readable, for there is little use in writing, however accurately, if what is written be not read. To put down facts correctly in regular order and without comment of any kind would be to write as an annalist rather than a historian. But while I have not refrained from passing judgment on men and things, I have done so only on the facts as they occurred; I have avoided speculation, and have not thought it necessary to write of what might be, but have dealt only with what was.

Thomas Davis, in one of his essays, gave his ideas of what an Irish History should be. He was a man of great capacity, and had he lived might have written such a History himself, but those of us with less capacity must be content with a lower standard of excellence. On one point, however, I have endeavoured to follow his advice, and that is—to avoid bigotry of race or creed. As between England and Ireland there was no room for such differences until the twelfth century, the previous portion of Irish history being concerned with the

triumphs of Ireland in religion and learning, and with the struggle against the Danes—perhaps the most interesting portion, as it is the most glorious. Nor did the religious differences with England arise until towards the close of the reign of Henry VIII., and are, therefore, little dealt with in this volume. But the race hatred existed from the first, or rather the contempt of the English for the Irish, which was even more galling than their hate. In the proscription of Irish customs and language and laws, in the denial to them of the status of English subjects or the protection of English law, that contempt was shown. For so much the English, or rather the Anglo-Irish lords, who acted in their name, deserve censure. Yet it ought not to be forgotten that these ages were ages of violence, when, regardless of right or wrong, the stronger prevailed and the weaker was overborne.

And if the Irish were wronged and robbed, and if they lost their liberties, were they not themselves largely to blame? Those who would be free must be prepared to defend their freedom. They must make sacrifices, they must discipline their strength, they must learn even from their foes. Had the Irish done this, it is at least probable that not all the power of England could have subdued them. If they had, says Mr. Froude, any real genuine national spirit they would have pushed "the pitiful handful of English into the sea." But they had not. They talked rather than acted; they could not but fail, for they took no pains to succeed; and while Scotland, with a less population and a country poorer and less in extent, was able to meet, and sometimes to defeat, the whole power of England, Ireland was kept for centuries, not in order, but in awe, by an army contemptible in its strength which never numbered but a few hundred men. It was not that she wanted soldiers, or that they were unable or unwilling to fight, for the Irish soldier, trained, disciplined, and capably led, is

equal to the first soldier in the world, and has proved this on many a battlefield. But they were undisciplined, inferior in arms, incapably led; their chiefs quarrelled, and thought not of their country, but of their clans. It was not, therefore, the strength of England, but rather the weakness and folly of Ireland, which led to the loss of her liberty. Nor is there any advantage in concealing these facts; and if the English adventurers deserve to be censured for their rapacity, the Irish deserve to be censured for their folly.

A History which is a record of many and repeated failures is not, perhaps, an attractive study, but, for Irishmen especially, it is a study which deserves attention. Experience is often a dear school in which to learn, but there is no school which teaches more valuable lessons; and what is history but the experience of the past? Nor do men learn only from success. They learn from failure as well, for they learn how it is that men have failed, and are thus warned not to walk the same road. And the Irish of the present day have much need to learn, and would do well to seek for guidance from the past. In the twelfth century, except a few seaport towns which were colonised by Danes, all Ireland was in the hands of one race. War and conquest, and persecution and proscription, and confiscation and plantations have since supervened; the original race has largely disappeared; and Norman and Saxon, and English Protestant and Scotch Presbyterian, have inherited their fields. But the conquerors have often been absorbed by the conquered; and in the vast majority of the Irish of the present day we can still trace the faults and the virtues of the original Celtic race. The want of initiative in the mass of the people, their utter helplessness without capable leadership, their reluctance to combine for any purpose, their want of foresight, their inability to take pains, their instability and infirmness of purpose—have not these characteristics appeared

in the twentieth century as well as in the twelfth? And others might be added which the passing centuries have brought, for if the cruel trials through which the people have passed have accentuated and developed some of their finer qualities, and have even added to them, there are points also in which the people's character has suffered. Are not these defects of character still operative for evil? The government is more tolerant, the laws juster than they were, yet the country does not prosper, and the people are still flying from it as if from a plague-stricken land. It would be well for Irishmen to ask is there not something amiss with themselves; it is a healthy sign for a nation to discover its faults and to set right what is wrong, and that nation is doomed which neglects to learn and to improve.

With the submission of the Irish chiefs to Henry VIII. we have reached a period when the relations between England and Ireland seem to have become simplified. Unfortunately for both countries, these relations became complicated and embittered by religious differences. How the Irish suffered and struggled under these new conditions remains yet to be told.

PREFACE TO FIRST EDITION

BY

HIS GRACE THE MOST REV. DR. HEALY

SOME people may be disposed to ask if there was really need of a new History of Ireland, seeing that there are so many already in the hands of the public. Yet it is difficult, if not impossible, to find a really good History of our country—what might be fairly described as an all-round good History—full, accurate, well-written, and impartial. If the Rev. Mr. D'Alton has not yet accomplished this task, he has certainly made a praiseworthy beginning. This is the first volume of what is intended to be a three-volume work, giving a complete history of Ireland from its remotest origins down to our time. It is an ambitious task, which cannot be accomplished without much learning, courage, and perseverance. We earnestly hope that Father D'Alton may hereafter be induced to undertake a complete History of his native Province or his native Diocese. He is certainly well qualified, for this first volume of his general History gives evidence that he possesses the most essential qualities of an historical writer. His style is easy and limpid; in description, as well as in narration, he is vivid and frequently picturesque; he possesses the critical faculty in a high degree; and holds the scales of historical justice with an even hand. Moreover, he is a painstaking writer in verifying his authorities; he has the great advantage of a good knowledge

of the Gaelic tongue, which enables him to consult for himself the original sources of our earlier history; and he has not failed to utilize all the State Papers and other official documents which the nineteenth century has produced in such profusion.

The time is eminently favourable for such a work as this. The Gaelic revival is still a rising tide, and young Irishmen, and Irishwomen also, are anxiously seeking for authoritative information on the history, the literature, the language, and the antiquities of their country. Here they will find a work that will satisfy their requirements in these respects, and we have no doubt that many of them will eagerly avail themselves of the opportunities that it offers. Father D'Alton bears a name not unknown in historic studies. He deserves personally great credit for devoting himself with so much ardour to the study of his country's history in the midst of his hard labours as a missionary priest. We earnestly hope the favourable reception of this first volume of his History will encourage him to complete the work, and in this we should naturally expect the sympathy and co-operation of all his fellow-countrymen.

JOHN HEALY,
Archbishop of Tuam.

PREFATORY NOTE TO THIRD EDITION

As some fault was found with my spelling of the Irish proper names in the first edition and first volume of this work, I have, to secure uniformity, made some alterations for the present edition. I have done so under directions and with the assistance of Dr. Douglas Hyde, to whom my grateful obligations are due. In other matters also which called for correction, some changes have been made.

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HISTORY OF IRELAND

CHAPTER I

Introductory

THE Phoenicians at an early age, perhaps as early as the foundation of Carthage (the middle of the ninth century B.C.), had planted colonies on the shores of Spain. These colonists, filled with the adventurous spirit of their ancestors, had passed beyond the Pillars of Hercules, reached Britain, and discovered the tin mines at its southern extremity. To supply from these newly discovered mines the ports of the Mediterranean with tin, they found to be a lucrative employment, especially as long as they enjoyed a monopoly of the trade. To preserve that monopoly they kept the position of Britain a secret, and all that other nations knew either of Britain or Ireland was that in some far distant part of the Western sea were the Cassiterides or Tin Islands, so distant and difficult of access that only Phoenician energy and skill in navigation could reach them. At a later date, Herodotus had heard that towards the north-west of Europe there was a river called Eridanus, which emptied itself into the sea and from which amber was said to come; but he did not seem to believe that there was any sea on that side of Europe, and as to the Cassiterides or Tin Islands, he had heard of them, and knew they supplied the south of Europe with tin, but of their position he had no knowledge. Both Britain and Ireland were shrouded in impenetrable gloom, and

on the map of the world as known to him they found no place.[1] The Carthaginians were as daring, as skilful in navigation, and as keenly anxious to acquire wealth by commerce as their kinsmen of Spain or Phoenicia, and in an expedition under Hamilco they discovered those famous Tin Islands which they had long sought for in vain. And as a result Festus Avienus wrote a description of the maritime coasts of the Atlantic (350 B.C.), and declared that at a distance of two days' sail from Britain was the sacred Isle of the Hibernians.[2] The Greek colonists of Marseilles followed in the wake of the Carthaginians, and the Romans followed the Greeks, but what the Romans knew of Ireland was little. Pliny maintained[3] that it was part of Britain and not a distinct island, and that in length it was 600 miles and that its breadth was just half its length. The statement of Strabo, who wrote in Greek, is that there are some islands round Britain, one of great extent called Ierna, lying parallel to it towards the north, but that he had nothing certain to relate about it except that its inhabitants are more savage than the Britons, feeding on human flesh, and enormous eaters, deeming it commendable to devour their deceased fathers, and having intercourse with their sisters and even with their mothers.[4] How little worthy of credence this statement is, can be gathered from his own words, for he relates it "perhaps without any very competent authority" and because "to eat human flesh is said to be a Scythian custom." Caesar came nearer to Ireland than either of these writers, yet he knew but little of it, and all he could say was that it was an island situated to the west of Britain and about half its size.[5] Of its coast-line, of its harbours and bays, of its climate and soil, of its productions, of its inhabitants and of their cannibalism and immorality, of which Strabo writes—of all these he knew nothing, on all these subjects he is silent.

[1] Herodotus, book iii. chap. 115.
[2] Lingard's *History of England* (10 vols.), vol. i. p. 17
[3] Pliny, book iv. chap. 30.
[4] Strabo, *Geography*, book iv. chap. 5.
[5] Caesar, *De Bello Gallico*, book v.

The scattered rays of light which had been cast on Western Europe by his predecessors enabled Ptolemy to repeat the information given us by Caesar. But he does little more than this, and on his map the position of Ireland is inaccurately given. He places it too far north, so that its extreme south is farther north than the northernmost point of Wales. The Cassiterides or Tin Islands, meant perhaps for the Scilly Isles, are placed hard by the north coast of Spain, and far distant from the south coast of Britain; and North Britain, or Scotland, is bent east, and no part of it is as far north as the northernmost part of Ireland. And the coast-line of Ireland is very inaccurately defined. That portion of the south-west which advances into the Atlantic is wanting; there is no trace of Galway Bay or the mouth of the Shannon; Donegal Bay is but imperfectly apparent; nor is there any part of Ireland which corresponds to Ptolemy's northern promontory, which juts out into the Atlantic, sharp and narrow.[1]

Agricola marched farther north than any who went before him; the Caledonian coast looking towards Ireland was lined with his troops; and he entertained thoughts of conquering Ireland itself, believing that it would contribute to the tranquillity of Britain. For the Britons, he thought, would lose courage and cease to fight, when they saw the last refuge of liberty in the West invaded, and Ireland having been reduced to the position of a Roman province, the last spark of liberty would be extinguished round their coasts. He had parleyed with an Irish chief, who, like MacMurrogh (MacMurchadha) at a later age, had been expelled from his own country and sought in his difficulties for aid from foreign arms. From the information supplied by this exiled chief, added to what the Romans already knew, Tacitus was able to say that Ireland was less in size than Britain, but larger than any island in the Mediterranean, that its coasts and harbours were well known to foreign merchants and traders, and that in soil and climate, in the manners and genius of its inhabitants, it differed little from Britain. But his placing it between Britain and Spain shows how inaccurate was his

[1] Vide *Ancient Classical Atlases.*

knowledge of its true position and how little the Romans had explored these western islands and seas.[1]

Among ancient writers Festus Avienus alone speaks of the Sacred Isle of the Hibernians, but in what the isle was sacred does not appear. Diodorus Siculus gave it the name of Irin, and a modern historian (Lingard) suggests that the word *irin* may be confounded with *ieran*, signifying sacred in the Greek language. By Strabo, and long after him by Claudian, Ireland was called Ierna, by Ptolemy Iouerna, by Solinus Juverna, and by Orpheus of Cortona Iernia, all of which names are plainly deducible from a common source. The transition from these words to Hibernia is easy and natural, though the form used by St. Patrick, viz. Hiberione, is peculiar and rarely used. It was the opinion of Camden that Ierna, or Hibernia, signifies a western country, and there is undoubtedly an Irish word—Iar—which means west; others derive the name from Heber, one of the sons of Milesius; others still affirm that the word is of Phoenician origin and signifies the remotest habitation. With sound sense, Ware has observed[2] that these observations on the etymology of the word are so much guesswork, that to give a true account of the name is difficult, and that, for himself, he would affirm nothing positive, but leave the matter undetermined.

For ages, down to the eleventh century, Ireland bore the name of Scotia, a name which is often derived from a Scythian source, the opinion being that if the Scythians were not the first of its inhabitants, they were at least among the first, and have thus left their impress on its name. But there are others who think the name Scotia comes from Scota, the wife of Gadelius, a lady who is reputed to have been the daughter of Pharaoh, while there are yet others who hold the opinion that the word comes from the Greek word σκότος, which signifies darkness, possibly, says Harris, because of its dark aspect, being

[1] Tacitus, *Agricola*, chap. xxiv. Perhaps his thus placing Ireland accounts for the following words—"melius aditus portusque per commercia et negotiatores cogniti."

[2] Harris's *Ware*, vol. ii. p. 3.

anciently overgrown with woods. Another name which it bore, and which still survives in a slightly altered form, was Irlandia, which is taken to mean the land of Ir, the first of the sons of Milesius, who was buried in the island. It was also called Fidh-Inis, or woody island, and Inis-Elga, from the name borne by the wife of Parthalon. By Plutarch, and after him by O'Flaherty, the island was called Ogygia, a word which signifies very ancient; and if, says Camden, what the Irish writers relate be credited, Ireland was not without good reason called Ogygia by Plutarch, for the Irish begin their histories from the earliest accounts of time, so that, in comparison, the antiquity of all other countries is in its infancy.[1]

The last name that need be mentioned is Inisfail, a name which, in poetry especially, has survived. This name it got from a fatal stone called Liafail, which was carried to Ireland by the Tuatha-De-Danann. It was called the stone of destiny and upon it kings of the Scythian race were always crowned. Long preserved in Ireland with the greatest care, it was taken to Scotland at a date not known. At Scone, in that country, it long continued, and each Scottish king was crowned upon it, until finally it was carried (1296) to Westminster, where it was made part of the coronation chair, and has been so used since then. The Liafail was the stone of destiny, and the island in which it was first preserved and venerated was the Isle of Destiny, or Inisfail.[2]

[1] Harris's *Ware*, vol. ii. p. 9.

[2] *Ibid.* vol. ii. p. 10.

CHAPTER II

The Earliest Inhabitants of Ireland

THE story that Ireland was peopled before the Deluge may be set down as a fiction, and the story that it was peopled in the time of Abraham as almost equally improbable. This colony, it is said, came from Migdonia, or Macedonia, in Greece, numbered 1000, and was under the leadership of Parthalon. For three centuries they occupied Ireland, and then the whole colony, numbering 2000, perished of a plague. In the pathetic words of one historian, "not one was left alive"; and this is all the chroniclers have to say of Parthalon and his people.

For thirty years the land was uninhabited and then a fresh colony came. Keating says[1] that the new-comers were related to their predecessors, the Migdonians, and spoke the same tongue, that they came by sea, starting from the Euxine in thirty-four vessels, each vessel manned by thirty persons, the whole expedition being under Nemedius, who was eleventh in descent from Noah. They landed at Inverscene, in the west of Munster, about 1900 B.C. While they occupied the country they cut down and cleared several forests, built several forts, and fought several battles. If such a people existed at all, all this may be readily believed, but when we are furthermore gravely assured that in their time several lakes burst forth, it is natural that scepticism should begin to assert itself. There is indeed an old tradition that at some remote period Lough Neagh was thus formed, and this tradition may have some foundation in fact, but as to any other lake in Ireland being at any time so formed, both history and tradition are

[1] *History of Ireland* (O'Connor's Trans.), p. 73.

mute. That several places were cleared of the trees with which they were covered is not unlikely, for Ireland abounded in forests, and if these Nemedians lived by agriculture the land should necessarily be cleared before it was tilled. If they were shepherds the same necessity existed, for they should have a free passage from one district to another so as to have the desired change of pasture for their flocks and herds. And they should also erect forts or strong places. In a primitive society, where law is not respected and force is the rule of human justice, it becomes necessary that men should combine for mutual protection and defence. The savage, as well as the civilized, have their women and children to guard, and must have a place of strength and safety which they can easily defend against external assault, and from the shelter of which they can issue forth and attack their foes. And certain it is that wars were among them. The passions from which conflicts spring are not peculiar to primitive man, and amongst all nations there have been wars. Yet, if these Nemedians fought among themselves and wasted their strength in internal discord, it suited them ill, for their united energies were required against a formidable foe.

These enemies, who incessantly attacked them, were a people called the Fomorians. It is the opinion of O'Flaherty [1] that they were from Norway and Denmark; Keating [2] is sure they were from Africa; both agree that they were pirates whose constant business was war and whose invariable object was plunder. "They lived," says the *Annals of Clonmacnoise*, "by piracy and plunder of other nations, and were very troublesome to the whole world." [3] The testimony of Cambrensis is worth little, but it is that they were giants who were continually making devastations in Ireland.[4] As early as the days of Parthalon they are said to have fought with his people near Lough Swilly, in Donegal. At Roscommon, at Camross, in Carlow, at Dalriada in Antrim, they fought with the Nemedians, who each time were the victors. But when

[1] *Ogygia*, part iii. chap. 56. [2] *History*, p. 77.
[3] P. 15. [4] *Topography*, Distinction iii. chap. 3.

Nemedius was dead and his people without a capable leader, the Fomorians renewed the attack. The battle between the rival armies was so obstinate and bloody that they almost annihilated each other. Victory remained with the Fomorians, and now, says the indignant historian (Keating), these vagabond Africans entirely subdued the old inhabitants and made them tributaries.

The small number of the Nemedians who remained were treated so harshly by their Fomorian masters, that the greater part of them finally left Ireland and went back to Greece. But hard as their lot in Ireland was, in Greece it was worse still. Their Grecian masters compelled them—so runs the tale—to dig clay in the fertile valleys, to fill it in leathern bags—whence their new name of Firbolg—and to carry these bags of clay up the mountains, so that the sides and summits of these mountains might be turned from barrenness to fertility.[1] After 200 years of miserable servitude, they escaped from their hard taskmasters, fitted out a number of vessels, and arrived in Ireland about 1300 B.C. The whole country fell into their hands, but they were not destined to possess it long in peace, for another race, more powerful still, soon came to conquer and to rule.

These were the Tuatha-De-Danann,[2] a branch of the ancient Nemedian colony, who left Ireland about the same time as the Firbolg. They went first to Denmark, thence to the north of Scotland, and finally landed in Ireland, about thirty years after their Firbolg kin. It was at Moytura, in Mayo, that the issue was decided between these rival races. The Firbolg were defeated but not annihilated. Some mingled their blood with the Tuatha-De-Danann, some were left in a position of suffragan authority; others crossed over the sea to the Isles of Arran, where for long after they ruled. Tradition still points to the old stone fort of Dun-Angus as the work of their hands, a building rudely but strongly built, which after the lapse of so many centuries still stands.

[1] Keating, p. 82.

[2] *Ogygia*, part iii. chap. 10; *Annals of the Four Masters.*

Should any one assert that the accounts of these various invaders—their voyages, their wanderings, and their battles—are nothing more than fables, he might easily be accused of temerity; but, on the other hand, should any one accept all these stories in full and write them down as history, he might as easily be accused of being over-credulous. In regard to the Fomorians, their very existence is at least doubtful, and may even be denied. The tendency of a people is to advance in knowledge with the advance of time, and if these Northmen (assuming that they were from Denmark) knew enough of navigation and war to fight and conquer in Ireland as they are said to have done, and this fifteen centuries before the Christian era, they should have been in the ninth century of the Christian era comparatively civilized. Yet at that date we find them, *i.e.* the Danes, the most brutal of savages, living upon piracy and plunder, and having the utmost contempt for the civilized institutions of more southern lands. As to Africa—Egypt especially—it is unquestioned that even in the most ancient times that country had attained a high degree of culture, and no doubt among the sciences she knew navigation was one. But it is very doubtful if her ships sailed outside of the Mediterranean, and there is very slender probability that at any time her sons made the acquaintance of Ireland, either in commerce or in war. And whatever be the birthplace of the Fomorians, if they lived in Ireland as undisputed rulers for over two centuries, they ought to have left some lasting monument of their existence. Yet, except some vague and shadowy traditions, and the perpetuation of their name in connection with the Giant's Causeway, they have left nothing as an inheritance to after-times. And the Nemedians, if regarded in the same light as the Fomorians, will suffer little injustice. Their wanderings and battles are sustained by no probability, and may be classed with the expedition of Jason in search of the Golden Fleece, or the wanderings of Aeneas over land and sea.

The origin of the Firbolg is lost in darkness impervious to the light of history, but we may regard their peculiar labours in Greece and their journey to Ireland as nothing more than

the embellishments of fiction. They ought not, however, to be classed with the Fomorians or Nemedians, as their claim to existence rests upon more solid grounds. Much more than the Tuatha-De-Danann, they have always been regarded as a real people, and in parts of Ireland there are still existing monuments which tradition has persistently associated with their name.

Efforts have been made to ascertain what the race was to which these Firbolg belonged, and for this purpose Dr. Wilde had recourse to ethnology. Skeletons long buried in the earth were dug up, and also implements of a very ancient and very primitive kind. With the zeal of an antiquarian and the skill of an anatomist, Wilde examined these ancient remains. Comparing in particular the conformation of the skulls, he concluded that the Firbolg were Teutonic, small, lively, with aquiline noses, dark complexions, and heads of great length from front to back. He also concludes that they used stone and flint hatchets, shell ornaments, stone mills, and clay urns; that they came from Norway and Sweden; and that the Tuatha-De-Danann were Celts, who used bronze in their weapons and instruments.[1] His industry and research were considerable, but his data were insufficient, his arguments are inconclusive, he takes too much for granted, and his conclusions are therefore unreliable. In the living subject, apart from peculiarities of dress or language, men of different races may easily be distinguished, and in the dead subject the flat-nosed negro of the African desert will scarcely be confounded with the dweller on the Yang-tse-Kiang. But the difficulty is great when we have nothing but the skeletons of men belonging to kindred types of the human family, and the difficulty is greater still when these skeletons have been buried in the earth for centuries, for in much less time the original peculiarities of these human bones would become so blurred and indistinct as to baffle the best efforts of comparative anatomy.

With at least equal plausibility, it may be conjectured that

[1] Davis's *Essays*, p. 84. Dr. Wilde, afterwards Sir W. Wilde, wrote "Lough Corrib" and "The Beauties of the Boyne and Blackwater."

these Firbolg were Celts. They were frequently spoken of as Belgae, and it is significant that in the time of Caesar a Celtic people bearing the same name were to be found both in Britain and Gaul. In Britain they dwelt on the south and south-eastern coast. In Gaul they dwelt on the shores of the English Channel, between the Seine and Rhine,[1] forming a most effective barrier against the encroachments of the German barbarians. It would not be surprising that this adventurous and daring people, who crossed over to Britain and settled there, should penetrate farther north and pass across to Ireland. This much might be expected from a people whose prowess was respected and feared throughout Gaul, and whose desperate valour all but overwhelmed the legions of Caesar on the banks of the Axona.[2]

If it is impossible to fix with exactitude the race to which the Firbolg belonged, it is equally so with the Tuatha-De-Danann. Assuming that they were a real people, they may have been Teutonic or Celtic; it is impossible to say. That they came to Ireland after the Firbolg and before the Christian era, and that they lived and ruled there, and that the sepulchral monuments of Dowth and New Grange[3] are the work of their hands, may perhaps be admitted, but more safely denied. By the Firbolg they were regarded as magicians, but this goes to show not that they were magicians, but that their knowledge was superior to that of the Firbolg themselves. It is the peculiar tribute which ignorance pays to superior knowledge. All else about them is wrapped in obscurity—the country from which they came, the manner of their coming, the battles they fought, the kings who ruled over them, the chieftains who led them to battle. In later times they are more usually regarded as spirits or fairies, sometimes interfering in human affairs and

[1] Caesar, *De Bello Gallico*, lib. i. cap. 1.

[2] *Ibid.* lib. ii. cap. 5 to 9. The ambassadors of the Remi declared to Caesar (*De Bello Gallico*, lib. ii. cap. 4) that the Belgae had sprung from the Germans, but they had then been absorbed by the Celts. Perhaps they might best be described as Celts, but not Gauls.

[3] These monuments are on the Boyne in Meath, are manifestly sepulchral, and have interior chambers such as the Egyptian Pyramids.

mingling with men, but living in the recesses of the green hills, where their palaces were built and their fairy revels held.[1]

It is matter for regret that Caesar, when in Britain, did not cross over to Ireland, or that Agricola did not attempt to carry out his boastful threat that he would conquer the whole island with a single legion.[2] We should then have valuable information about the country and its inhabitants from the pen of Caesar or Tacitus, historical truth would have gained, and we should have light to see our way, instead of having to grope in the dark with conjecture as our deceptive guide.

[1] *Vide* D'Arbois de Jubainville's *Irish Mythological Cycle.*

[2] Tacitus, *Agricola*, cap. 24. "Saepe ex eo audivi," says Tacitus, "legione una et modicis auxiliis debellari obtinerique Hiberniam posse." Apparently Agricola had a poor opinion of what resistance the Irish could offer, or a very extravagant opinion of what a Roman legion could do.

CHAPTER III

The Milesians

WE may conjecture but cannot determine what were the boundaries of Ancient Scythia, and what was the great branch of the human family from which the Scythians sprang. Perhaps these different tribes, scattered over such an extent of territory, belonged to a common parent stock, or perhaps they were nothing more than a confederation of barbaric tribes, similar in habits and occupations, but bound together more by the bonds of common interests and common dangers than by the memory of a common origin. If they had a common origin, it is purely a matter of speculation whether they belonged to the Mongolian or Aryan family, but it is worth noting that Gibbon[1] speaks of them as Scythians, or Tartars, as if he would trace their descent to a Mongolian source. It is probable that in very ancient times these tribes were scattered over the steppes of Central Asia; it is certain that, before the time of Herodotus, they were to be found in Europe, where their homes were spread along the Euxine, from the Danube to the Caucasus; whilst in Asia they had occupied the vast districts, northward from the 40th degree of latitude, and east and west from the Caspian to the Sea of Japan. These Scythians were a pastoral people. By day they attended to their flocks and herds, and when night came, they retired within the shelter of temporary encampments, where men and animals were huddled together promiscuously. Their bravery in battle was often tried and as often proved, and few enemies could withstand the impetuous charge of the Scythian cavalry; but it must have been the

[1] Gibbon's *Roman Empire* (4 vols.), vol. ii. pp. 140, 164-8; Keating, p. 96.

expression of their enemies' fears rather than the sober statement of truth, that they ate, drank, and even slept on the backs of their hardy steeds.

It is amid this people of uncertain origin, and in their country of vaguely defined limits, that the ancient chroniclers of Ireland fix the home of the Milesians. They do not, however, undertake to give the exact geographical limits of Scythia. But when they pass from the geography of the country and come to speak of its inhabitants, their imaginations cease to be inactive. History speaks of these Scythians, even after the dawn of the Christian era, as the veriest savages, but in the glowing pages of these ancient chroniclers they appear as a highly civilized people, who, in their habits and manners, in the laws which they enacted and administered, in the state of education amongst them, were a model to the nations which surrounded them. They quote with eagerness the boastful language of Justin that these Scythians conquered other nations but were never conquered themselves, and that, indeed, they had heard of but never felt the Roman arms.[1] They assume with Josephus[2] that the Scythians were descended from Magog, the son of Japhet, and from Magog to Milesius they follow the fortunes of these Scythian leaders in laborious detail.

But even the fertile fancy of imaginative writers cannot invest with interest the personality or achievements of most of these leaders; and those who deserve even a passing notice are but few. Niall, son of Feniursa, is one. His father is said to have known *all languages*, and Niall's attainments were little if at all inferior. He settled in Egypt, married Scota, the daughter of Pharaoh, and obtained a principality by the shores of the Red Sea. Here he tried to assist Moses and the persecuted Israelites. In return for this kindness to God's chosen people, his son Gadelius, when bitten by a serpent, was

[1] Keating (O'Connor's Translation), p. 97. He seems to have had access to many MSS. and Annals not known now, and he seems to have accepted everything contained in them as true.

[2] Whiston's *Josephus*, p. 36.

miraculously cured. But the friendship of Moses involved the enmity of Pharaoh. Niul and his followers were driven from their possessions, and had to seek for new homes in distant lands. Like Aeneas, *per varios casus per tot discrimina rerum*, they wandered over many lands and many seas. From Egypt to Greece, from Greece to Crete, from Crete to Gothland, and finally from Gothland to Spain, where for generations they lived and ruled. In that country one of their chiefs, Milesius, maintained the ancient reputation of his race for military renown. Animated with a spirit of adventure, he fitted up a fleet and sailed over the Mediterranean, visited Scythia, and finally came to Egypt, where he was warmly welcomed by the reigning king. Appointed leader of the Egyptian forces, he reorganized the army, enforced military discipline, humbled the pride of the Ethiopians, taught the enemies of Egypt that Egypt was to be feared, and diffused a feeling of security and repose from the confines of Ethiopia to the Mediterranean. On his return to Spain, he found his countrymen much harassed by their neighbours the Goths. But he soon taught the Goths the same lesson he had taught the Ethiopians—the humiliating lesson of defeat. The Goths, however, continued troublesome, a famine came upon the land, and the Scythians, or Milesians, as they are henceforth to be known, resolved to leave Spain, where their condition had become miserable, and to seek for some new country which they might possess in peace.

An old Druid[1] had long since foretold that the Milesians would one day possess a far-off Western isle. This prophecy they now recalled, and consulting together, they concluded that Ireland was the island mentioned in the old Druid's prophecy, and to Ireland with all their forces they resolved to go. Keating says they landed in Ireland 1300 B.C., McGeoghegan gives the day and the year 17th May 1029, while O'Flaherty puts it about 1000 B.C. The number of their ships was thirty; in each ship was thirty of the most courageous of their troops, their wives also were on board, and many others followed them, allured by the prospect of obtaining possessions in this

[1] Keating, p. 114.

new plantation. They first attempted to land at Wexford, but the "Tuatha-De-Danann, alarmed at the number of their ships, immediately flocked towards the shore, and by the power of their enchantments and diabolical arts, they cast such a cloud over the whole island that the Milesians were confounded, and thought they saw nothing but the resemblance of a hog. The inhabitants by these delusions hindered the Milesians from landing their forces, so that they were obliged to sail about the island, till at last, with great difficulty, they came on shore at Inverscene in the west of Munster."[1] At Slieve (Sliabh) Mis, in Kerry, they first encountered the Tuatha-De-Danann, and here Scota, the widow of Milesius, fell. A more decisive battle was fought at Tailteann. On that fatal field the three Danann kings and their wives were killed, and the sceptre finally passed from Danann to Milesian hands. As Milesius was dead before his followers arrived in Ireland, the sovereignty of the island was divided between his two sons, Heber and Heremon. Two years later, these two sovereigns quarrelled; a battle was fought at Geashill, in the King's County, Heber was defeated and slain, and Heremon became sole monarch of Ireland, and the first in that long line of kings which ended with Roderick O'Connor.

It may be asked how much of all this is true—how much is fact and how much is fiction?—nor can a satisfactory reply be given. To ask the question is much easier than to answer it. Those who are engaged in mining speak of refractory ore, and complain of the difficulty they experience in extracting from it the pure gold; and similarly, in these legends of a long-past age, the difficulty is to extract what truth they contain from the mass of error which surrounds it. It is certainly true that such a people as the Scythians existed, and that mention is made of them in histories of a very ancient date. That they were savages pure and simple in the time of Herodotus, and that, even in the fifth century of the Christian era, they had not advanced beyond the manners portrayed in the court and camp of Attila—all this is equally true. The conclusion is, therefore,

[1] Keating, p. 134.

obvious and necessary that they could not be numbered among civilized nations two thousand years before the Christian era; and the most credulous will smile at the suggestion that their culture was equal and coeval with that of Assyria and Egypt. Their wanderings over the Mediterranean, the learning of Niall, and the military exploits of Milesius rest upon no solid foundation; and the most partial will scarcely claim that the Milesians established themselves in Ireland long before Rome was built or the Commonwealths of Greece arose.

When authentic history first speaks of Ireland, the country was inhabited by a Celtic people, called Scots or Milesians; Britain and Gaul, at the same time, being inhabited by a kindred race. It is not probable that they were the first inhabitants of the country, but before the introduction of Christianity they had certainly become the dominant race, the former inhabitants having been either absorbed or exterminated, or, perhaps more correctly, having a distinct but subordinate position. Keating, who seems to accept without question the whole story of the Milesian wanderings, has no manner of doubt that they came from Spain to Ireland, and grows angry with Camden for suggesting that they came from Britain; he chooses to be directed by the "ancient records of the kingdom rather than by the ill-grounded supposition of any modern whatsoever."[1] Yet Camden's supposition, supported by O'Flaherty, does not appear unreasonable. It could scarcely be expected that these Milesians knew much of navigation, or that their rude vessels could stand the full shock of the Atlantic, or the treacherous currents of the Bay of Biscay.[2] It is easier and more natural to believe that they came from Gaul to Britain, and from Britain to Ireland, than to suppose that they came direct by sea from Spain. Buchanan[3] is anxious to show that they came direct from Gaul to Ireland, but his arguments are inconclusive and carry no conviction. But

[1] Keating, p. 131.

[2] Unless we suppose they were Phoenicians, and even Keating does not suppose this.

[3] Quoted by Keating and refuted by him, pp. 126-8.

whether they came directly from Spain, or whether they passed over from Gaul to Britain and thence to Ireland, cannot with certainty be ascertained. These are questions which will always remain doubtful, and in striving to arrive at the truth it must be admitted that we derive but little assistance either from the arguments of Buchanan or the credulity of Keating.

For obvious reasons, the long list of Milesian kings coming down in unbroken succession from the tenth century before the Christian era must be taken as legendary, and deserves none of that consideration which is due to historic truth. To be able to claim that a settled form of government existed in Ireland long before such a government was established at Greece or Rome would be indeed flattering to the national vanity. But such a claim has not the least amount of probability on its behalf, and one of the oldest and—accepting O'Donovan's estimate of him[1]—the most accurate of our chroniclers, Tighernach, has the good sense to point out that events recorded previous to the time of Cimbaeth, 300 B.C., are altogether legendary. Nor indeed does posterity lose much by consigning to oblivion the vast majority of these Irish kings, for even fiction itself can say nothing of them except that they were born and that they died. There are, however, a few who may be excepted, and of these Ollamh Fodhla is first in order of time.

In the first list of kings given by O'Flaherty,[2] Ollamh is put down as fortieth, but the author does not give the year of his accession nor the length of his reign. The name he bore —Ollamh, which signifies professor—testifies that he was a learned man, and he did everything that even a king could do to encourage learning. Anxious to have good laws passed, and to have besides the records of the kingdom accurate and trustworthy, he assembled, every third year at his palace at Tara, an assembly of the princes, druids, bards, and other learned men of the kingdom; public affairs were then discussed, new laws enacted, old laws, if useless or injurious, repealed. The records of the kingdom were carefully examined and

[1] *Four Masters*, vol. i. p. 72. [2] *Ogygia*, part iii. chap. 29.

criticized, whatever was deemed inaccurate was expunged, due corrections were made, and, thus corrected, these records were handed down to posterity as authentic history. The book in which the facts of history were thus carefully transmitted was called the Psalter of Tara, and the assembly itself was called the Feis.

In the joint reign of Cimbaeth and his wife, Macha, the palace of Emania, near Armagh, was built.[1] The next sovereign—the 78th king—was called Ugaine, the first of these ancient monarchs whom the chroniclers call Great.[2] Not content with the sovereignty of Ireland, he went over the sea to France, where his arms were ever victorious, until at length he ruled over all Western Europe. He married a French princess and left twenty-five children, among whom he divided Ireland into as many parts. This division was abolished by a subsequent king, Eochaidh, who divided Ireland into five divisions—Ulster, Leinster, Connaught, and two Munsters. Over each province there ruled a pentarch or provincial king.[3]

Tuathal, who lived in the second century of the Christian era, was the first king, it is said, who imposed the Boru tribute on the kings of Leinster. He was a warlike king, and had much fighting with the various tributary princes, all of whom he vanquished. To punish them he took from each a portion of his territory, which he erected into a vast royal demesne corresponding to the present counties of Meath and Westmeath. But against the King of Leinster he was specially enraged. It appears that this prince had married a daughter of Tuathal's, and after some time, pretending that his wife was dead, he demanded and received her sister in marriage. The sisters were kept apart at the palace of the King of Leinster, but on an occasion they met and were so heart-broken at the wrong done to them that they both sickened and died.[4] In revenge for this outrage Tuathal decreed that henceforth Leinster should pay the Ardri a yearly tribute of 150 cows, 150 hogs,

[1] *Annals of Clonmacnoise*, p. 41.
[2] O'Flaherty's *Ogygia*, part iii. chap. 38.
[3] *Ibid.* part iii. chap. 43. [4] Keating, p. 237.

150 pieces of cloth, 150 cauldrons, 150 couples of men and women in servitude, and 150 maidens, with the King of Leinster's daughter among them.[1] Whether this tribute was imposed by Tuathal or not, it is certain that such a tribute was imposed by some Ardri, and that it led to most disastrous results. Successive Ardris enforced payment, the Leinster kings, whenever strong enough, repudiated the imposition, ill-will was thus engendered, disputes arose, wars and bloodshed followed, and these rival princes in fighting among themselves prepared the way for the yoke of the stranger.

The exploits of Conn of the Hundred Battles have furnished much matter to poets and bards, but when we come to the reign of Cormac Mac Art, we arrive at a period where the facts recorded may be considered facts and not mere fiction, though these facts are often embellished and exaggerated, and not always easy to recognize. Cormac, who reigned in the third century, is described as the best king that Ireland ever had up to his time. He held regular meetings of the Feis at Tara, enacted many wise laws, carefully corrected the Psalter of Tara, and even wrote a book called *Princely Institutions*.[2] It is said that he became a Christian, and thereby much embittered the Druids.[3] But his fame is altogether eclipsed by that of his son-in-law, Finn, son of Cumhal, the leader of the Fenian Militia, or standing army of Ireland. The exploits of Finn and his Fenians have been illustrated by the genius of Ossian, the son of Finn, who was a poet as well as a warrior. There are probably many things ascribed to Ossian which he never wrote, and perhaps also in the translations of his poetry that have come down to us there are many interpolations and errors; but that Ossian lived and wrote, and that he is the great central figure in the literature of ancient Erin, need not be regarded as a matter of doubt. The impudent claim of MacPherson to make him a Scotchman,[4] and to transfer the

[1] *Annals of Clonmacnoise*, p. 54; *Four Masters*, vol. i. p. 100, note.

[2] *Transactions of the Ossianic Society*, vol. v. p. 198.

[3] Lady Ferguson, *The Irish before the Conquest*, p. 120.

[4] *Ossianic Society*, vol. v. p. 179. Dr. Johnson's opinion of MacPherson is well known.

KING CORMAC'S MEETING WITH ETHNEA

FROM A DRAWING BY JOHN H. BACON, R.A.

exploits of Finn and his Fenians to Caledonia, has long since been rejected. It could not survive the discovery of the forgeries which gave it birth.

Nobody would receive as historic facts the tale of Finn and his Fenians as described by Ossian and his contemporaries. Even Keating rejects many of them as fabulous, and grows angry with Boetius for suggesting that Finn himself was a giant and was fifteen cubits high.[1] Yet, strip these tales of obvious exaggeration and mere poetic adornment, leave out the gods and goddesses, the giants and the fairies, and there is no reason why they should not have a basis of historic truth. Cormac is reputed to have been a monarch of great prudence. He saw that Britain was already in Roman bondage, and he had only too much reason to fear that the Romans would cross the Irish Sea, and that the fate of Britain would soon be the fate of Ireland. In such circumstances prudence would suggest having a trained and disciplined force to guard the coasts against pirates and robbers, to watch for the coming of the invaders, to combat them in the field when they came; and to none could the command of this force be given with more justice than to his son-in-law, Finn, who, in fighting the Romans, would be defending his family inheritance as well as the liberty of his native land. And if the Romans had come it is not unlikely that their task would be much more difficult than Agricola expected; they would probably have encountered fierce opposition and met with valour equal to that of Caractacus.[2] These Fenians were not called upon to repel foreign invasion. They became restive, insolent, and rebellious, until finally, after a hard-fought struggle, they were overthrown at the battle of Gavra.[3]

In the last years of the fourth century Ireland was ruled by Niall of the Nine Hostages. Undisputed master at home, he made incursions into Caledonia and Britain, and even into

[1] Pp. 281-4. [2] *Student's Hume*, p. 9.

[3] The Ardri, Cairbre, was slain in the battle, and very many of his troops, but the Fenians were almost totally destroyed (Miss Brooke's *Reliques of Irish Poetry*, p. 147).

Gaul. The Roman Empire was then tottering to its fall, Britain had none to rely on but native defenders, and Niall, aided by the Picts[1] of Caledonia, broke through the frail defence of the Roman wall and made Britain his tributary province. Nor did he relinquish his conquest till the Roman legions were recalled to Britain, and then the discipline and experience of the Roman soldier and the military genius of the ablest of the Roman generals prevailed. Perhaps even Stilicho himself would have suffered defeat, but that, in the crisis of the battle, the Attacotti, who fought in the army of Niall, deserted to the Romans and turned their weapons against the Irish king. These Attacotti were descendants of the ancient Firbolg, who were subjugated by the Milesians and who submitted with impatience to Milesian rule. Taken into the army of the Ardri and trusted as loyal soldiers, they acted as traitors in the hour of trial.

Whoever will read the history of these islands during the first centuries of the Christian era will note that Ireland was the country of the Scots; that colonies of these Scots passed from Ireland to Caledonia, where they settled; that these Caledonian Scots, with their kinsmen from Ireland, and the Picts frequently harassed the Roman province of Britain; that it was Ireland alone which was called Scotia; and that if sometimes Caledonia was called Scotia, it was always called Scotia Minor, to distinguish it from Ireland, which was Scotia simply, or Scotia Major. Gibbon is not willing to admit all this, and is ready to assert that probably Ireland was peopled from Caledonia "by a colony of hungry Scots."[2] But the evidence of facts is against him. Claudian, in describing the wars which Stilichó waged against the Picts and Scots, always

[1] The Picts, according to Bede (*Ecclesiastical History*, Bohn's ed., pp. 6, 7), came from Scythia to Ireland, but the Scots who dwelt there would give them no settlements, and directed them to proceed to Caledonia, which they did. They then asked *wives* of the Scots, as they had none themselves. The Scots acceded to their request, but only on condition that they should choose a king from the female royal race rather than from the male, "a custom which has been observed among the Picts to this day."

[2] Vol. ii. p. 141.

speaks of the Picts as belonging to Caledonia, and the Scots as belonging to Ireland. In the vivid language of poetry he represents Britain as giving thanks to Stilicho for having defended her, when the Scot stirred up all Ireland,[1] and when the sea foamed beneath his hostile oars; and writing of the wars of Theodosius, he says, that while Thule grew warm with the blood of the Picts, icy Ireland wept for the numbers of her Scots that were slain.[2] Bede, as well as Camden and Buchanan, state, not as a matter of dispute but of certainty, that Caledonia was peopled by Scots from Ireland; and Hume, Scotchman though he is, and naturally jealous for the antiquity of his race, has written that from the second to the eleventh century the Scots were the inhabitants of Ireland, and Ireland alone bore the name of Scotia. Before this accumulated mass of testimony even the stubborn scepticism of Gibbon must give way. In a later portion of his great work he admits, grudgingly and ungraciously, it is true, that after all some slight credit may be given to the Irish traditions, and possibly in one of Niall's excursions into Britain St. Patrick was taken away into captivity.

[1] Me quoque vicinis pereuntem gentibus, inquit,
Munivit Stilicho, totam cum Scotus Iernam
Movit et infesto spumavit remige Tethys.
De Laudibus Stiliconis, lib. ii.

[2] Incaluit Pictorum sanguine Thule,
Scotorum cumulos flevit glacialis Ierne.
Honorii Augusti de 4° Consulatu.

Theodosius did not march as far as Thule, nor did he go even near it; but some allowance must be made for poetic imagination.

CHAPTER IV

Pre-Christian Civilization

IN pagan times Ireland must not be regarded as one kingdom, governed by one king and one common system of laws; it was rather a confederation of small states or clans, each making its own laws, raising and spending its own taxes, governed by its own chieftain, and practically independent within its own limits. There was an *Ardri*, who ruled at Tara, and who, amongst the various princes, was first in dignity, but whose authority over these princes—and he claimed some—was shadowy and nominal, and frequently his authority was flouted and his person and office despised.

The smallest organism—political and social—next to the family was the *fine* (pronounced *finna*).[1] It was more than a family, but it was in the family it took its rise, and was nothing more than the family overgrown beyond its original limits. Originally the family had its allotted portion of land, but as children and grandchildren were born, and in their turn arrived at maturity and became heads of families themselves, or at least at an age when they could inherit and possess property and partake of responsibilities, the original land became divided and subdivided among them. This aggregate of individuals, freemen born, members of the same clan, deriving their descent from a common ancestor, bound together by ties of kinship and interest, and possessing a common portion of land, made up the corporate body called the *fine*. At its head stood the *flaith-fine*. He was the *paterfamilias*, the representative of the *fine*: he was to sue and be sued in its

[1] Ginnell, *The Brehon Laws*, pp. 104-5; O'Curry, *Manners and Customs of the Ancient Irish*, vol. i. pp. 162-3. See also Joyce's *Social History of Ancient Ireland* (London, 1904).

name, to guard its interests and to defend its rights. Probably he had a larger portion of land than the other members of the *fine*, as this would seem to be demanded by his greater duties and obligations. Besides the *flaith*, there were sixteen other members in the *fine*, divided into four groups of four each, the property of each group and the nature of their duties and rights being measured by the nearness or remoteness of their kinship to the *flaith*. The first group, called the *Gelfine*,[1] consisted of the *flaith* and his four sons, if he had such, or, in default of these, his nearest male relatives; the second group was the *Derbfine*; the third, the *Iarfine*; and the fourth, the *Innfine*. Should a vacancy occur in one of these groups by death or otherwise, then one was advanced from a lower group to a higher; and similarly, should, for instance, a son of the *flaith* arrive at maturity and become enrolled a member of the *Gelfine*, then one of this group was lowered to the second group, one of the second to the third, until at length one of the *Innfine* was thrust out of the *fine* altogether and became simply a member of the sept, no longer burdened with the responsibilities that membership of the *fine* entailed.

As the *fine* consisted of several families, so the sept consisted of several *fines*, the number being variable. The whole sept had its own specific portion of land, and within its limits the members were free, subject only to the clan and its requirements. The head of a sept was called a *flaith*. He was the official head and representative of the sept, as the *flaith-fine* was of the *fine*, and the chieftain of the clan. In addition to his private property, which might be considerable, he had an allowance of land, tribute being also paid to him by the sept.

Higher than the sept, and usually embracing several septs, was the *clan*.[2] The extent of its territory was called a *tuatha*,

[1] The Gelfine were the representatives of the rights and liabilities of the whole fine, formed a kind of family Council, and when property in default of direct heirs passed to the collateral heirs, the Gelfine received the inheritance and assumed the responsibility attached to it (*Manners and Customs*, vol. i. p. 164).

[2] *Manners and Customs*, vol. i. p. 199.

and would, perhaps, correspond to a modern barony, while the aggregate of persons who made up the clan was called a *cinel.* To the *fine* and sept it bore a resemblance, and, indeed, was nothing more than a fuller development of these, for in all the connecting link was kinship, and both ruler and subject were children of one common ancestor, confederated together for the preservation of their common inheritance. The clan recognized as superior the provincial kings and paid them tribute, but the tribute was not large nor the authority of the provincial kings often more than nominal, and to all intents and purposes, in theory and in practice, the clan was a self-governing, independent state.

The king or chief of the clan was chosen from the heads of the septs, and was elected at an assembly called the *tocomrach,* which was attended by all the heads of the septs and probably also by the *flaith-fines.* Nobody could become king unless he was of full age, nor if he was blind, lame, deaf, stupid, or had any remarkable blemish either of mind or body. In the same way, and subject to the same conditions, the *tanist,* or next heir to the chieftaincy, was elected. Should the king die, or become disqualified by reason of some blemish after his election, the tanist at once became king and a new tanist was elected. Usually the king's son became tanist, but this was not necessary, nor did it always happen ; it might be some near relative of the king whose qualifications were remarkable and recognized, it might be some *flaith* in no way related to the ruling chief, unless we include that uncertain relationship which existed between members of the same clan. The king was the official head of the clan, provided with an official residence or *dun,* and a large allowance of land as his official patrimony. He was not, however, the master of the clan, but rather its servant, his duties and rights being specific and well defined. In peace he was first in dignity,[1] and in war his was the perilous privilege of leading his clansmen to battle. He collected the taxes by his officers and he also spent them, without being asked for an account as to how they were spent. Amply provided for, he was strictly

[1] Ginnell, pp. 57-67.

debarred from doing any servile work, such being considered beneath the dignity of a king.[1]

Next to the kings, the most important class were the Druids. Caesar has described the Druids of Gaul and their beliefs, and the Druidism of Ireland and Britain was the same. Indeed, it was in Mona, or Anglesea, that its doctrines and practices were taught in their highest perfection, and Caesar suggests that it was from Britain Druidism was introduced into Gaul.[2] The Druids taught the immortality and transmigration of souls, worshipped the sun and moon, held in special reverence the oak tree, and had their sacrifices in the open under its shade. They worshipped idols, and before an idol called Crom Cruach they probably offered human sacrifices[3]—perhaps the prisoner taken in battle, the criminal guilty of some grave offence, sometimes their own children were sacrificed. These Druids knew something of medicine; they studied the stars, and from their position, as well as from the croaking of ravens and the chirping of wrens, they undertook to read the secrets of the future. They decided disputes, and whoever refused to abide by their decision, they excommunicated, making him an outcast, whom to avoid was a duty and whom to touch was to be defiled. They were exempt from military service and taxation, and had enormous influence and power. In the beginning, at all events, they were Brehons and Bards as well as priests, and had a monopoly of learning. But as enactments were multiplied and judicial decisions became numerous, and required some technical training to interpret, a separate class—the Brehons—arose, whose business it was, leaving religious ceremonies to the Druids, to confine themselves to the study of law.

In each clan there were two assemblies—the *cuirmtig*,[4]

[1] *Manners and Customs*, vol. i. p. 235.

[2] *De Bello Gallico*, lib. vi. cap. 13-14.

[3] O'Curry, *Manners and Customs*, vol. ii. p. 222, vehemently denies this, but he instances a case where the British Druids offered human sacrifices; and if the doctrines of Irish and British Druids were the same, why exempt the Irish? Dr. Healy holds an opposite opinion to O'Curry (*Ireland's Ancient Schools and Scholars*, p. 3). See also *Tripartite Life of St. Patrick*, Introd. p. 158.

[4] Ginnell, p. 57.

attended by all who paid taxes, and at which laws were introduced; and the *dál*, attended by the *flaiths*, where these same laws were examined and either rejected or passed. Of other assemblies there was the *Aenach*,[1] which had its origin in funeral games, was attended by several clans, and at which athletic and other competitions and fairs, in the modern sense, were held; but laws, though probably discussed, were not passed. There were the assemblies of Tailteann and Uisneach,[2] where laws were promulgated but not often enacted; and lastly, the *Feis* of Tara,[3] where laws were enacted for the nation at large. Other sources of law were local customs, which in time grew to have the force and character of law; but the source from which most of the law came was the decisions of famous Brehons, for the laws of Ancient Ireland were for the most part judge-made laws.

To know all the laws enacted, to remember the various local customs, to appreciate the worth of judicial decisions, and to decide according to justice and law, required much training, and we find that before one could attain to the rank of Brehon and decide with a Brehon's authority, he must have had a legal training of twenty years. There was at least one Brehon in each clan whose position was official, and who had a grant of land provided by virtue of his office. After a time the office passed from father to son; but the son, like his father, should have the necessary legal training. There were also non-official Brehons,[4] who lived by their fees and had no official endowment from the clan. And no doubt, besides those who sat as judges, there was a supply of professional advocates ready to plead for hire, for such a class of men have not been wanting at any period, nor in any country where there was law. It was the right of every freeman[5] who had suffered wrong to seek for

[1] Ginnell, p. 53; O'Curry, vol. i. p. 255. O'Curry adds that these Aenachs were always held in cemeteries.

[2] Ginnell, p. 51.

[3] O'Curry, *Manners and Customs*, vol. ii. pp. 17-19.

[4] Ginnell, p. 84.

[5] *Senchus Mor*, vol. i. p. 291. He should have "honour price" are the words.

redress, and it was his right also to select the Brehon before whom the case was to be tried. He might have one or he might have many causes of complaint. His relative might have been murdered, his wife outraged, his bondman attacked, his house burned, his beehive robbed ;[1] his neighbour's cattle might have trespassed on his land, his bees might have stung him[2] or sucked honey from his flowers ; he might have been slandered, or a poet might have satirized him, and in Ancient Ireland, Christian as well as pagan, there was something specially fatal in poetic satire. For one and all of these offences the punishment was an *eric* or fine. But not every man had a right to complain, and it has been, therefore, necessary to add that the complainant should be a freeman. A labourer or cowherd ; a slave of any kind ; a lunatic ; the son while his father lived,—none of these could be plaintiff in a lawsuit, though the master could complain of an injury done to his son or his slave, and the guardian of the lunatic, if the lunatic had suffered wrong. Nor could the injured man proceed against every one. The fool was exempt from punishment because of his want of reason, so also, for a like cause, was the madman and the idiot, and exemption was also extended to the dumb. But against every other man, from the *céile* to the king, he had a right of complaint, and to compensation if his case was proved. But he should be careful not to make random charges, and if it was discovered that he had given false evidence[3] all redress was instantly denied him. Nor were his troubles over when the Brehon had pronounced in his favour and his opponent had been fined. There were no sheriffs or sheriffs' bailiffs, there were no police, the whole machinery for carrying out the decrees of the courts of law was wanting, and the successful litigant himself was compelled to put the legal decree in force. And in doing so he should walk warily, for if he made distress on the defendant in excess of what was allowed, he

[1] *Senchus Mor*, vol. i. p. 167.

[2] *Ibid.* vol. iv. p. 177 ; vol. ii. p. 121. There is much in the Brehon laws about bees, which would indicate that they were much valued.

[3] *Ibid.* vol. i. p. 57.

was in turn liable to be fined himself. A chief levying distress on his inferior [1] could proceed without notice, but in every other case previous notice was necessary. Nor could he make a seizure, for instance, of the defendant's cattle, except accompanied by six other persons—three to enter the defendant's land, the plaintiff, a witness "who has honour price," and a distraining advocate; and four more persons to remain outside, each of these being persons "who had honour price." Then the animal might be seized and impounded, its maintenance charged, and ultimately confiscated altogether if the debt was not paid and the animal itself redeemed. Instead of making a seizure in this manner, the plaintiff might *fast* on the defendant, and this was the more usual form of distress when the defendant was a person of distinction. The plaintiff fasted before the defendant's house, waiting to be paid, during which time the defendant was bound under pain of further fine to order food, and besides not to delay payment of the debt [2] —a strange form, indeed, of executing a decree. To modern notions these legal provisions and practices are rude and archaic, yet they are founded upon equity, and when English writers of a later age wrote of the Brehon law that it was a "lewd custom," the severity of their censure is more apparent than its justice.

Another privileged clan were the Ollamhs (Ollavs), who were professors of law, and many were the pupils that came to learn its secrets at their feet. Some of these pupils they took into their homes and treated as members of their own family. This was literary fosterage, and was merely a subdivision of that general system of *fosterage* [3] which so commonly prevailed in Ancient Ireland, and which continued down through the centuries long after the Anglo-Norman invasion. Under

[1] *Senchus Mor*, vol. i. p. 113.

[2] *Ibid.* vol. i. pp. 117-119. If the defendant refused to pay after having been fasted on, he was liable to *twice* the amount of the distress; if the plaintiff continued to fast after the amount of the distress was offered him, then he forfeited the debt altogether.

[3] There are many provisions in the Brehon laws as to how foster-children are to be trained.

this system children, especially of the upper classes, were brought up and educated in other families than their own. They were fed, clothed, and educated, and when they came of age were dismissed with a parting gift to their parents' homes. Not unfrequently there sprang up between foster-child and foster-parents the closest personal attachment, so close and so enduring that in comparison the claims of blood and kindred were forgotten.

High among the privileged classes were the Bards. They had charge of genealogies and history and reduced the laws to poetic form, for when writing was little known this was the easiest way the laws could be remembered. Like the Brehons and Druids, their position too was official. So also was the *brughaidh* or public hospitaller, whose house was always to be open to the traveller. He had an endowment from the clan, to enable him to dispense hospitality and succour the traveller in distress. These were the official classes and might be called the aristocracy. Midway between them and the common people were the *aires*,[1] who, though belonging to the *flaiths*, had only recently lifted themselves from the common people by the acquisition of wealth. Socially they were as the *Novus homo* of the Romans.

Below these privileged classes were the *céiles*.[2] They were freemen, each a member of the *fine* and farming a portion of land, for which he paid a land tax called a *ciss*, not heavy in amount, and which went for the general purposes of the clan—such as repair of roads and maintenance of the poor. He was also bound to military service when his chieftain went to war. If he was unable to stock his land his *flaith* gave him stock on a system of hire-purchase. The *céile's* (pronounced *kail-a*) house and immediate surroundings, his cattle and crops, could be disposed of by himself as private property; but his land, either in life or in death, he could only dispose of subject to the consent of his *fine*. There were *céiles*, too, who had no property. They were born with an inheritance of land, but

[1] Ginnell, p. 97.

[2] *Ibid.* pp. 111-116; O'Curry, *Manners and Customs*, vol. i. p. 129.

from want of industry, perhaps through crimes committed and fines imposed, they had become poor and were unable to stock their land, and even surrendered it altogether. Lower than these were the slaves. Some, called *bothachs*[1] (cow-keepers or cottiers), were born in the clan but had no property, and usually served the *flaiths* as servants and labourers, receiving wages in return, or perhaps a small patch of land. The *fudir*[2] were mostly from outside—runaways and criminals, outlaws, tramps; prisoners taken in war, or kidnapped, as St. Patrick was, in foreign and predatory expeditions. These were considered as chattels, who did the roughest work for the lowest wages, though even these by degrees could raise themselves in the social scale by industry and ability, until, after several generations, their descendants might partake of social status and political rights.

In those turbulent times it was difficult for a clan to preserve its independence, surrounded as it was by other clans greedy of increased territory and power, and hence arose the necessity of purchasing support from outside. In this we can trace the origin of tribute to provincial kings. Sprung from necessity and continued by expediency, this payment became habitual and customary; but, except in time of war, when the clan should furnish and equip a force for the provincial king, the tribute was not heavy and was easily borne. The amount paid varied in different clans,[3] and in some cases no tribute was paid. The tribe of Burishoole, in Mayo, for example, was bound to pay the King of Connaught one hundred cows, an equal number of hogs, and one hundred mantles; but the Hy-Brian and Hy-Fiacra paid no tribute, nor were they bound to go into battle with the King of Connaught "except for

[1] Ginnell, p. 149. [2] *Ibid.* p. 155.

[3] For instance, the King of Connaught was entitled to the exclusive hunting of Sliave Lugha and to the fresh ale of Murrisk (*Book of Rights*, p. 19); the King of Ulster to the games of Cooley and the "mustering of his host at Muirthemne" (*ibid.* p. 21); and the kings of Cashel from the single tribe of the Muskerry should get 1000 cows and 1000 hogs, and from the men of Owney 100 cows "at the time of calving" and 100 pigs (*ibid.* p. 45).

stipend."[1] The relations between the provincial kings and the Ardri were similar to those between these same provincial kings and their sub-chiefs; and in each case, while they were entitled to tribute from their inferiors, they were also bound to give their inferiors something in return.[2] As the sub-kings or chiefs were weak and the provincial kings strong, these tributes were regularly paid; but it might happen that the sub-king was a strong man and the provincial king a weakling, destitute of capacity or vigour, and in such cases his authority was despised and his tribute remained unpaid. And so it was also with the High-Kings. Cormac and Conn and Niall were respected by the provincial kings, but other Ardris were neither respected nor feared: their commands were unheeded and their menaces ignored. This was especially the case after they ceased to reside at Tara, for then even their title to be Ardri was disputed, and they no longer received the fickle allegiance that the filling of that office implied.

Much fault has been found with the clan system, and to it have been attributed many of the evils which befell Ireland. But it is well to remember that such a system existed among most, if not all, primitive peoples. It existed in ancient Britain and in Gaul, as well as among the ancient Germans. The successive stages of government are usually found to be, first, tribes and their chiefs; then some capable chief extends his sway over several tribes; and finally, by a process of eliminating the incapable, there arises some chief of commanding talents, who brings all the tribes under his rule, establishes a strong central government,[3] and enacts and has the power

[1] *Book of Rights*, p. 109.

[2] The King of Connaught was bound to give the Chief of Siol Muireadhaigh a ring, a dress, and steed, a shield, sword, and coat of mail; to the Chief of Umhall, 5 steeds, 5 swords, and 5 ships; to the Chief of Dealbna, 6 swords, 6 shields, 6 steeds, 6 tunics, and 6 drinking-horns; and to the Chief of Gregraidhe, 6 weapons, 6 tunics, 6 bondmen, 6 bondwomen, and 6 coats of mail (*Book of Rights*, p. 113).

[3] Such a government was established under Brian, but his death and that of his whole family, or nearly so, destroyed the hope of its continuance.

to enforce one uniform system of laws. In Ireland this natural process of development was arrested in its growth, first by the Danish and again by the Norman invasion, and we are left with the undeveloped product—the clan system—with all its drawbacks and imperfections. To say that it had defects is to say that it was human. With a number of petty independent states living side by side there is always danger of friction, and the danger is increased when the people are warlike and brave; and hence it need cause no surprise that Ancient Ireland was filled with perpetual strife.

Nor was power equitably distributed within the clan The king was too liberally provided for, and the tendency of the system was to gather all power and wealth into his hands. His official allowance was large, but in addition he hired out stock to the poorer landholders, and this was a fruitful source of wealth, besides making these landholders his dependents. His privilege of collecting and spending the taxes [1] also enabled him to grow wealthy, for though these taxes were intended to be spent for the public good—for the repair of roads and bridges and such works, as also to discharge the clan's liability to their superior king—yet how often must they have been diverted to personal gain! These kings—like other men—had the vices and failings of human nature, and the opportunity to gratify rapacity and greed was not always allowed to pass. The tax-collectors were his creatures, the slaves who worked his lands were in a worse position still, and their ranks were continually added to by tramps and criminals and outcasts. These various elements combined formed a dangerous body of adherents who were ready to stand by their chief, whether he was right or wrong, and who, whilst he encroached on the rights of others, were ready to overawe those who murmured at his encroachments. In time these chiefs laid greedy hands on those lands which were used as commonage by the tribe; they made these lands their private property; they became arrogant and overbearing; and he who in theory and in law was the servant of the clan, in practice and in reality became its master. Like the ancient

[1] Ginnell, pp. 122-3.

Germans, these chiefs desired "materia munificentiae per bella et raptus,"[1] and thought it tame and spiritless to acquire by labour what could be grasped by force. The Brehon law allowed them to quarter themselves, from time to time, on their clansmen; to live—themselves and their retainers—at their expense; and by this species of extortion the profits and savings of a whole year's hard work and industry were dissipated, perhaps in a single night. Through pure caprice, or perhaps to avenge some fancied wrong, these chiefs often engaged in war, and the lives of their clansmen were recklessly sacrificed in these wars, even as their property was by *bonaght* (or *buanacht*) and *coshery*.[2] When not engaged in war much of the chief's time was spent in playing chess within his *dún*, or chasing the deer outside its ramparts; but some also of his time was spent in feasting and drinking, surrounded by flatterers and buffoons. The *Book of Rights* makes frequent mention of "drinking-cups for carousing"[3] to be paid as tribute, and it may be assumed that these cups were not for ornament but for use. The drink used was ale brewed from barley, the virtues (or should it be said the vices?) of whisky were unknown.

The status of women was degrading. For the most trifling and insufficient causes divorce was granted, women were given as tribute just as cattle were, they were freely bought and sold, and in the Brehon laws the price of a maiden is put down as three cows.[4] But in this they were not worse than their neighbours of Britain and Caledonia, where polygamy was common and even polyandry not unknown. It is revolting to record on such respectable authority as St. Jerome that he saw an Irish

[1] Tacitus, *Germania*, cap. 14.

[2] Harris's *Ware*, vol. ii. pp. 74, 75. *Bonaght* was an exaction imposed by the chief for the maintenance of his soldiers, his horsemen, his heavy-armed foot or Gallaglasses, and his light-armed foot or Kerns. *Sorohen* was somewhat similar, and *Coshery* was an exaction for provisions and lodgings for the chief's retinue and himself. All these exactions were imposed at the caprice of the chief. The corresponding English terms were Coyne and Livery.

[3] *Book of Rights*, pp. 73-75.

[4] *Ibid.* pp. 163-81; *Manners and Customs*, vol. i. p. 176; Ginnell, p. 213.

tribe—the Attacotti—feasting upon human flesh in the woods of Gaul,[1] but this disgusting practice must have been exceptional and rare, for nowhere else is cannibalism attributed to an Irish tribe; and it is at least possible that St. Jerome was deceived and that those whom he saw were not Irish. The discord and strife bred by the clan system were not conducive to the growth of culture or good morals, yet it would be unjust to assume that when St. Patrick came to Ireland he found it a nation of savages. Some culture there certainly was, and some chiefs and kings were not unworthy to be remembered, but their merits were not the system's but their own. There are some constitutions so robust that they can live in a tainted atmosphere, as there are some plants so hardy that they flourish amid the winter's blasts.

Whilst O'Curry warns us that to give an account of the literature of pagan Ireland is impossible, he himself gives a list of thirty authors who lived and wrote from the days of Ugaine Mór to Laeghaire, a list which may surely be regarded with scepticism.[2] It is, however, certain that a species of writing called Ogham was known, and perhaps owes its origin to Ancient Ireland; and a knowledge of Roman letters would surely be derived from Britain before St. Patrick's time. There was intercourse between the Irish and Britons, Christianity was introduced from Britain, and why not equally Roman letters? Nor was music, either vocal or instrumental, uncultivated; for music has always had for the Irish a peculiar charm. In tales that go back to pagan days mention is made of the Banshee's wail and the Druid's shout, and the *Esnaid* or chorus was sung by Finn and his warriors as they sat around their watch-fires. The horn or trumpet, the fiddle and the bagpipes were played, so also was the tympan; but it was from the harp the sweetest

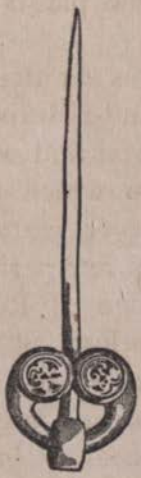
[1] "Ipse adolescentulus in Gallia vidi Atticottos, gentem Brittanicam, humanis vesci carnibus" (St. Jerome, quoted by O'Curry, vol. i. p. 31). There was certainly a tribe called the Attacotti among the Irish; perhaps there was a *British* one also, and it was these and not the Irish St. Jerome saw.

[2] *Manners and Customs*, vol. ii. p. 49; *Cambrensis Eversus*, vol. i. pp. 480-86.

Bronze Sword

Gorget or Torque for the Neck (Pure gold, weighs 16½ ozs.)

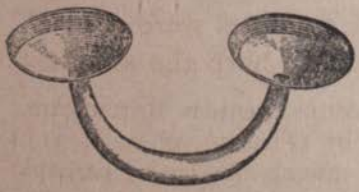
Gold Brooch

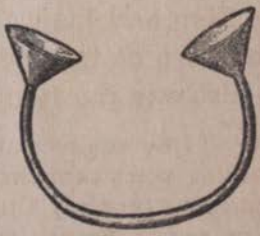


Arrow-head of Flint

Celt

Pins or Fasteners





Fibula or Link (Solid gold, weighs 5¼ ozs.)

Celt or Battle-axe to be fitted in a handle

Fibula or Link

ANCIENT ORNAMENTS AND WEAPONS

music was obtained, and as its chords were struck by a skilful hand, it moved in turn every emotion with which the human breast is filled.[1] In the old legend, Dagda, as he plays, compels his enraptured hearers sometimes to sleep, sometimes to laugh, and sometimes to weep.

Passing to the mere mechanical arts and sciences,[2] it is impossible to say to what extent mining was understood. Then as now there was iron at Arigna, coal at Kilkenny, gold and silver and copper in the Wicklow hills; but in later times no old workings appear to have been discovered which would show where the ancient Irish had mined, and it may be, as some suggest, that the metals used came from foreign lands. Working in metals, at all events, was understood, and the rings and torques, the anklets, bracelets and girdles for personal adornment, and the sword and spear, the *craoiseach*, the *fiarlann* or curved blade, and the brazen shield for the sterner purposes of war attest no small share of mechanical skill. The materials of dress were woollen and linen, sometimes also the skins of beasts. The dress of the lower orders was scanty and rude, but we do not read anywhere that they were altogether naked, or that they painted their naked bodies, as did the Britons and Caledonians.[3] A *brat*[4] or cloak covered the upper portion of the body, a *berrbroc*, or kilt of skins, covered the loins, whilst the feet were either naked or covered with sandals made with cowhide, the hair on the outside, such as may still be seen in the Islands of Arran. The dress of the upper classes was more elaborate, and Cormac's dress, as he appeared at the Tara feis, was not unworthy of a king. "He had a red buckler with stars and animals of gold and silver, a crimson cloak fastened by a golden brooch, a neck torque of gold, a white shirt interlined with red gold thread, a girdle of gold inlaid with precious stones, shoes of gold, and two spears in his hand with golden

[1] *Manners and Customs*, vol. ii. pp. 380, 306, 364-8, 266, 214-18.

[2] *Ibid.* vol. i. pp. 422-30-39-57-61; vol. ii. pp. 235-54; vol. iii. pp. 102-6, 13, 62-68; Miss Brooke's *Reliques*, p. 108.

[3] Caesar, *De Bello Gallico*, lib. v. cap. 14.

[4] *Manners and Customs*, vol. i. pp. 383-4, 397.

sockets; and besides, he was symmetrical of form, without blemish or reproach."[1]

The ancient Irish knew little of building and few houses were built of stone,[2] these being of dry masonry, for the use of mortar was unknown. Many houses were but mud cabins, but more frequently they were of wood and wicker-work, round in form and consisting of only one apartment. For greater security some houses were built in lakes, the foundations being piles of wood. The approaches to these lake-dwellings, or *cranóges*, as they were called, were narrow causeways, which could be easily defended in case of attack. The *flaith's* house was called a *lis*, often surrounded by a mound of earth or dry masonry, in which case it was called a *rath* or *caiseal*. The king's house was called a *dún* and had two ramparts surrounding it, the space between these two, whenever possible, being filled with water. These frail houses are long since gone and the sounds of revelry within them are hushed, but the mounds which surrounded them may still be seen in many parts of the country—an object of curiosity to the stranger, an object of dread to the timid and superstitious; for here, they say, when the shades of night fall, the fairies hold high revel and the ghosts of the departed are seen. The rude character of the furniture[3] was in keeping with the houses. Vessels were made of dry and hardened clay or stone, vessels for carrying were made of leather, whilst drinking vessels were of wood, and in the better class of houses of horn and metal. Being shepherds and stock-raisers, the people made little progress in agriculture, though flax and corn were sown—the corn ground by the quern and, later on, by water-mills. For inland transit there were roads on which carriages and other vehicles were drawn, either by horses or oxen. There were five great roads which might be regarded as national highways, all branching off from Tara, and there were, besides these, many of lesser

[1] *Manners and Customs*, vol. ii. p. 19. Cormac, it appears, was not always without blemish, as he was subsequently dethroned because of some physical disqualification.

[2] *Ibid.* vol. i. pp. 296-317.

[3] *Ibid.* vol. i. pp. 356-60.

importance.[1] Those on the sea-coast had their *curachs*[2] or small boats, made of wicker-work and covered with hides, and in these tiny vessels they boldly traversed the deep. Larger vessels they also must have had, for they frequently pillaged the coasts of Britain, and Tacitus states that the Irish ports were well known.[3] This indicates commercial intercourse with other countries, though the absence of a convenient medium of exchange must have hampered trade and commerce. In Caesar's time the Britons[4] used small pieces of metal as money, but even this practice was not adopted in Ireland, and the exchange in kind was clumsy and cumbrous and unworthy of a people with any pretensions to civilization. Under the influence of Christianity the progress of Ireland, especially in the higher forms of culture, was rapid, and in a short time the fame of its scholars and its schools resounded throughout Europe.

[1] Introduction to *Book of Rights*.

[2] Such vessels may still be seen in the Isles of Arran.

[3] Tacitus, *Agricola*, cap. 24. The words would seem to imply that the ports and harbours were better known than those of Britain, which would certainly seem strange, Britain being so much nearer the Continent, and so much more in touch with civilization. Perhaps his meaning is that the *ports and harbours* of Ireland were better known than the *island* itself.

[4] *De Bello Gallico*, lib. v.

CHAPTER V

St. Patrick

IN the History of Ireland, during the fifth century, there is no event of such importance as the introduction of Christianity, and in that work the great central figure is St. Patrick. To him and to those who laboured under his direction the conversion of Ireland from paganism has been always attributed, and in his own day as in succeeding ages he has borne the title of Ireland's National Apostle. The magnitude of his work, as well as his attractive personal character, have furnished him with many biographers. Yet it would seem that a multitude of biographers do not always evolve certainty out of doubt, nor make plain what is obscure, and though much has been written of St. Patrick, the doubt and obscurity still remain. It is still doubtful when and where he was born; much of his life has to be accounted for by theory and conjecture; and nobody can tell whether his age at death was a hundred or a hundred and twenty years. One adventurous sceptic [1] has denied that such a man ever existed; others maintain that there were not one but two St. Patricks; [2] whilst others appear to contemplate him as something more than human, have raised his most ordinary

[1] Ledwich, *Antiquities of Ireland*, pp. 362-70. Ledwich's theory of the Irish Church was that Christianity flourished in Ireland long before St. Patrick's time, its preachers being *Asiatic* missionaries, who preached doctrines strongly at variance with Rome; and so obstinately attached is he to this theory that, though he can produce no evidence in its favour, he still clings to it, and is ready to call names to his own co-religionists—Usher and Camden.

[2] Cardinal Moran's *Essays on the Early Irish Church*, p. 46. There seems to be good grounds for this opinion, as there was another Patrick—called Sen-Patrick—who was converted by the Irish Apostle, became a monk at Glastonbury, and died there in great sanctity in 457.

actions to the dignity of miracles,[1] and have, without necessity and without reason, multiplied these miracles beyond belief. It is this confusion and exaggeration, this excessive credulity and excessive scepticism, which have furnished a pretext for the gross misstatement of Gibbon that, in the ninth century, there were sixty-six Lives of St. Patrick, and that they contained sixty-six thousand lies.[2]

One of St. Patrick's earliest converts was Fiacc of Sletty. He was son of Erc, son of Bregan, of a good family, and was a pupil of Dubhthach, the chief poet to the Ardri. Like his master, he became a Christian, was consecrated bishop by St. Patrick, appointed Bishop of Sletty, and helped to spread the faith throughout the Leinster province. In a hymn which he composed in honour of St. Patrick, he gives the name of the Saint's birthplace as Nemthur, a place which has been identified as Nanterre, at the foot of Mont Valerian, about seven miles from Paris.[3]

It is considered more probable that St. Patrick was born at Boulogne;[4] but a third view, very strongly supported and very widely accepted, is that he was born at Dumbarton,[5] in Scotland, in 372. His father was Calpurnius, a deacon, and it appears a decurio;[6] his mother was Conchessa, reputed to be a relative of St. Martin of Tours. At all events, St. Patrick always held St. Martin in great reverence, and it seems not improbable that they were bound by ties of kindred. In what manner he spent his early years is not known. In his *Confession* he says himself that "up to his sixteenth year he did not know God," and if these words be taken literally, they

[1] This is especially the case with Jocelin (*Life and Acts of St. Patrick*).

[2] Gibbon, vol. ii. p. 308.

[3] *Tripartite Life of St. Patrick*, vol. ii. pp. 403-5; a work edited with great care and learning by Whitley Stokes and published in the Rolls Series.

[4] This is the opinion of Lanigan and of Alzog.

[5] *Tripartite*, vol. i. p. 9. There is no question connected with St. Patrick's life and labours more hotly contested than the question of the place of his birth. The battle still rages, and with little prospect that we are nearing its close.

[6] *Ibid.* vol. ii. p. 357; Morris's *St. Patrick* (4th edition), p. 57.

would indicate that he lived as a pagan, having no respect for Christian truths. But the humility of a Saint—and St. Patrick had to the full a Saint's humility—would prompt him to magnify his faults and minimise his merits, and the words may justly be regarded to mean that he lived, as so many youths have done, believing as a Christian, but heedless of the practices of his religion—not necessarily guilty of any grave offence against faith or morals, but rather of those sins of omission and carelessness which so often spring from the waywardness of youth.

About 388, Niall the Irish king made a predatory expedition into Britain, plundered and robbed as he went along the coast, and making a descent near Dumbarton, carried away St. Patrick and a number of others as captives. The Saint was sold as a slave to a pagan chief, Milchu,[1] in Antrim, and here he spent six years. The son of a Roman decurio, and therefore brought up tenderly, he must have felt all the more keenly the condition to which he was reduced. Dressed in the poorest fashion, his diet of the coarsest, his position that of a slave, his occupation herding cattle and swine, nothing was wanting to complete his misery. In this condition many would have murmured against Providence, perhaps fallen into despair; but it is in such circumstances that patience is tried and virtue gathers strength. St. Patrick took it all as punishment for the sins of his youth, and neither murmured nor repined. The snow and the sleet fell, the frost came, the biting wind swept over the hills of Dalriada, and to St. Patrick, clad in the scanty dress of a slave, it must have been trying in the extreme. Yet he bore it all patiently, and whilst he faithfully tended his master's property, he constantly turned to God in his afflictions, and a hundred times in the day and as many times in the night he prayed.[2] About 395, as the result of a vision,[3] he himself says, he escaped

[1] *Tripartite*, vol. i. p. 19. [2] *Ibid.* vol. ii. p. 361.

[3] On a certain night he had heard a voice in his sleep saying that he should soon return to his own country, and again after a short time he heard a voice saying that his ship was ready—not near at hand but distant —"Ducenta Millia Passus," a place unknown to him and where he knew nobody.

to the coast, embarked on board a vessel lying at anchor there, and after many hardships got back to his native land.

From the time of St. Patrick's arrival in Britain until his second coming to Ireland in 432, there is an interval of nearly forty years, during which what he did and where he spent his time is not satisfactorily explained. The current tradition is that he went to Tours to his relative St. Martin, and that here he spent the closing years of the fourth century. His journey to Tours was made in the depth of winter, at Christmas time, when the cold was intense, and by the banks of the Loire, some distance from Tours, the Saint took refuge under a blackthorn tree. The local tradition is that to shield him from the cold, as well as to honour him, the shrub expanded[1] its branches, shook off the snow with which it was covered, and arrayed itself in flowers, white as the snow itself. The shrub still exists, and still in the midst of winter is covered with foliage and flowers, while all other such shrubs in the locality are leafless and bare, and so it has been from time immemorial. Such is the tradition. The village where the phenomenon occurs year after year is called St. Patrice, and the flowers of the shrub are called by the native "les fleurs de St Patrice." After this strange adventure, St. Patrick reached the monastery of St. Martin. Originally a soldier, St. Martin deserted the camp for the cloister, and at Marmoutier, near Tours, established a community of monks. The fame of his sanctity went abroad, and in a short time he found himself surrounded by nearly eighty followers zealous to imitate his virtues. From the cell of a monk he was raised to the throne of a bishop; but the honours of the episcopacy he did not seek, and in his humility would have declined, and as Bishop of Tours he still lived the mortified life of a monk.[2] He still dwelt in a monk's cell, gave his means to the poor, lived on bread and water, always wore haircloth, and in the austerity of his life and the severity of his

[1] Morris's *St. Patrick*, Appendix. The shrub was seen, in 1850, by Mgr. Chevaillier, President of the Archaeological Society of Touraine, and by Father Morris himself in 1881.

[2] Healy's *Ancient Schools and Scholars*, pp. 44-45.

mortifications his biographer might challenge a comparison with even St. Basil or St. Antony.[1]

When St. Martin died, about 400, St. Patrick returned to his relatives in Britain, where he remained but a short time. Once more he went to Gaul, and placed himself under the guidance of St. Germanus of Auxerre. This Saint's career was not unlike that of St. Martin.[2] An advocate and an orator, he had practised in the Roman courts, where he acquired a reputation for eloquence. A successful man of the world and addicted to its pleasures, he suddenly changed his life, relinquished fame and riches, and for the applause of the world he substituted the solitude and obscurity of a convent cell. Like St. Martin, from being a monk he became a bishop, but it was his rank and not his *life* that was changed, for he still wore his shirt of haircloth, never drank wine, and slept on the bare earth. It was here St. Patrick acquired most of his learning, here he was advanced to the priesthood, and here he spent the greater part of thirty years.[3] The state of Ireland was often before his mind; in his visions and dreams he heard the plaintive cry of its people asking him to come and walk among them;[4] and in his waking moments he must have mourned over their pitiable condition, steeped in paganism and error. Amongst them, he felt, was his call to labour, and, after consultation, he resolved to proceed to Rome for the necessary authority. Before leaving, he stayed for some time at the monastery of Lerins, then presided over by St. Honoratus, thence he passed on to Rome. He took his way through Ivrea, and was there consecrated bishop by Amator, whom Cardinal Moran thinks was no other than St. Maximus;[5] and at Rome he was commissioned by St. Celestine to proceed to Ireland. Those who are in the habit of denying his Roman mission would do well to remember the sensible words of Father Morris, that "it merely meant the apostolic blessing on

[1] Gibbon, vol. ii. p. 505.
[2] Healy, p. 47.
[3] Morris, pp. 86-87, thinks he wandered about a good deal from one monastery to another.
[4] Healy, p. 71.
[5] Morris, p. 113.

one who was about to go in search of martyrdom."[1] On his return from Rome, St. Patrick passed, accompanied by some priests and bishops, through Gaul and Britain, and finally arrived in Ireland in 432.

To the traditional account of St. Patrick's life grave objections are raised. They are put with clearness by Whitley Stokes, and by him are considered fatal to its acceptance.[2] It is said that if St. Patrick was absent from Ireland nearly forty years, he would have forgotten to speak the Irish language in 432, and he appears to have been able to speak it; that if he had lived so long in the school of St. Germanus, he would have been able to write better Latin than he wrote in his *Confession*; that one so zealous to convert the Irish would never have waited for forty years to begin; and, most fatal objection of all, that if he had been absent from Ireland so long, he could not have written, as he has done, that he had lived among the Irish from his youth. Regarding these objections as fatal to the current tradition, Whitley Stokes has his own theory, which is that St. Patrick, after escaping from captivity, went to Gaul, acquired sufficient learning to get ordained there; then, as a priest, he came to Ireland, where he remained several years, but meeting with poor success went back to Gaul, and thence to Rome, where he was consecrated bishop, and then returned to Ireland.

This theory is plausible but not necessarily true, for what is plausible is not always true. Nor should the current tradition be lightly set aside for what, after all, is but a theory. If St. Patrick never met any Irish in Gaul, and never spoke Irish for nearly forty years, probably he would have forgotten it altogether. But there was intercourse between Ireland and Gaul, there were Christians in Ireland; and might not some of these have met St. Patrick in Gaul, perhaps occupied cells at Marmoutier or Auxerre? St. Patrick evidently looked forward for years to preaching the Gospel in Ireland; he firmly believed he was divinely called to do so, and to speak the Irish language he knew would be a necessary preparation for the work, and

[1] Morris, p. 115. [2] *Tripartite*, vol. i., Introduction, p. 138.

whatever opportunities were thrown in his way to speak it he would certainly seize. To write a language with facility requires practice, and perhaps St. Patrick had but little practice in writing Latin at Auxerre. In Ireland he had much less, for his time was occupied in preaching to the people, founding churches and schools, passing from one district to another, but everywhere speaking the language of the people amongst whom he lived. It was at the close of his life that he wrote his *Confession.* He had then spent nearly sixty years in Ireland, his tongue and pen had become habituated only to the Irish language, and by that time he would have lost the art—if he ever had it—of writing Latin with facility. His zeal to convert the Irish was undoubted, but zeal to be effective must be tempered by prudence. He must first acquire knowledge, which to one so ignorant as he was when he escaped from Ireland would take many years. When he had acquired the knowledge, he would be bound to consult his superiors, and await their decision and then act on their advice; and this would take many years more. And there are indications that from men he got contradictions and disappointments in abundance, and that nothing but the conviction that his call was from Heaven could have sustained him through all these years.[1] If we are compelled to take the words "from my youth" (*a juventute mea*)[2] in the strictly literal sense, they would mean that St. Patrick came to Ireland at latest in 412, that is, before he had passed his fortieth year. But it may be that the words are to be taken differently. When St. Patrick wrote he was an old man, and had already laboured for over fifty years in Ireland. And as he remembered the dangers he passed through, the hardships he underwent, the miseries he had borne through that long space of time, he must have thought that at the commencement the vigour and activity of youth were his, and that in everything—even in years—he was young. It may be that he contemplates, not the number of his years, but rather the vigour and activity of his body

[1] Morris, p. 103.
[2] Smith's *Latin Dictionary.*

and mind. However the words be explained, the year 432 has been taken as the year of his arrival in Ireland.

He found many things changed since his escape from captivity. Niall of the Nine Hostages was dead: he had been assassinated in 405 in Gaul.[1] He left a numerous family among whom his dominions were divided, the Ulster portion going to his sons, Owen and Connell, from whose names their territories came to be called Tirowen and Tirconnell.. Niall's nephew, Dathi, was his successor as Ardri, and he too made incursions into Britain and Gaul. Tradition has it that, while leading his army at the foot of the Alps, he was, in the year 428, killed by lightning. Then Laeghaire, son of Niall, became Ardri. There were Christians in Ireland in those days, and in 430 Palladius, a bishop[2] and native of Britain, was sent by Pope Celestine "to the Scots who believed in Christ." To what extent Christianity existed is uncertain, but the number of Christians must have been few. Palladius met with many obstacles, and this, coupled perhaps with the feebleness of declining health, must have disheartened him. He left Ireland and returned to Britain, where he soon died, leaving to St. Patrick both the labour and the glory of converting the Irish.

St. Patrick landed in Ireland, probably at or near Bray, in the County of Wicklow. In the spirit of a Saint returning good for evil, his first care was for his old master, Milchu, who still lived, and with the object of converting him he proceeded northwards. But the stern old pagan would have none of his Christianity: a pagan he was born and a pagan he would die. Rather than meet St. Patrick and submit to the indignity of being instructed by his former slave, he set his house on fire, and taking his treasures, jumped into the flames, where he perished.[3] With Dichu, another Ulster chief, St. Patrick was more successful. He and his household were baptized, and he also gave St. Patrick a site for his first church at Saul, near Downpatrick, where long afterwards the Apostle died. Passing southwards, St. Patrick met near Dundalk a

[1] *Four Masters*, Keating, p. 326.
[2] Healy, p. 49.
[3] *Tripartite*, vol. i. p. 39.

youth named Benin, or Benignus, who became his most attached follower as well as coadjutor in the Archdiocese of Armagh. It was at Slane, and in sight of Tara itself, that St. Patrick determined to celebrate the Paschal feast, and here he lighted the Paschal fire. It was a most dangerous thing to do. The Ardri and his court were then at Tara, and were celebrating some great festival—perhaps some of the great pagan festivals, perhaps the birthday of the king himself.[1] During the continuance of the festival it was unlawful to light any other fire except the fire of Tara, and whoever did committed a crime for which death alone could atone. His Druids informed the Ardri of the fire lighted at Slane, and one of them prophetically announced that if that fire is not put out to-night, it will never be put out in Erin.[2] If the fire represent the fire of Christianity, the prophecy has been fulfilled. Sometimes, it is true, the fire has burnt low, the heat it gave out was little and its light was dim, but it still burned, and never once through the changing centuries has it been completely extinguished.

Laeghaire was not of the material of which converts to Christianity are easily made. Brought up in paganism, he clung with tenacity to pagan errors. Much influenced by the Druids, he wished for no other priesthood, regarded with ill favour this new religion, which preached self-denial even to kings, and looked with disdain upon its accredited apostle, so humble and so poor. But the greatest difficulty was with the Druids. They were fighting for their great privileges, and had an instinctive dread that if Christianity got any foothold their own power was gone for ever. The artifices of the dishonest, the tricks of the unscrupulous, the weapons of despair, and even of murder, they did not hesitate to use, and more than once the life of St. Patrick was attempted. The contest between them and the Apostle reminds us of that between Aaron and the Egyptian magicians, and the result in both cases was the same, for the victory was with Patrick as with Aaron. His biographers tell with delight how the Druid, invoking the

[1] Introduction to *Book of Rights*. [2] *Tripartite*, vol. i. p. 43.

ordeal of fire, was burned to ashes, while Benignus, the Christian champion, remained untouched;[1] how the Druids brought snow as well as darkness on the plain, but were unable to remove either until St. Patrick intervened; and how, when the Ardri, enraged at the death of his Druid, attempted the Apostle's life, twelve thousand of the king's followers were miraculously slain. It is easy to be sceptical about these statements, and to scoff at them as so many childish fictions, the utterances of partiality and credulity; but the fact stands out that Christianity conquered, that Laeghaire himself embraced the new faith though he did not persevere in it, that Dubhthach, the Chief Poet, was converted, and that thousands followed his example, and that, at Tara, Druidism received a shock which was but the precursor of its final ruin.

After remaining at Tara some time and baptizing many, St. Patrick proceeded northwards, overthrew the idol of Crom Cruach in Leitrim, and erected a Christian Church where it had stood. From Leitrim he passed over the Shannon and traversed Connaught, and remained and laboured in that province for seven years. By the Druids alone was he opposed; by all others he was well received, and among every class his converts were many. Among these converts were the two daughters of the Ardri—Eithne the Fair and Feidelm the Ruddy. They were being fostered at the palace of Cruachan, and one day coming to a well in the neighbourhood to wash their hands, they found St. Patrick accompanied by some of his disciples. In the conversation that ensued St. Patrick explained to them his religion, telling them that his God was the God of all things, of the heavens and the earth, of the sea and river, of the sun and moon and stars, of the high mountains and lowly valleys; and he explained the mystery of the Trinity, and taking up the Shamrock he pointed out that as the three leaves grew from one stem, so did the

[1] *Tripartite*, vol. i. pp. 57-59. Both were put into the same house and the house set on fire; the Druid was placed in a wet portion with a Christian vestment on him; yet the Druid was burned though the vestment was unharmed.

three Divine Persons partake of the same Divine Nature.[1] The two princesses were converted, and as they expressed a wish to see Christ face to face, their wish was granted; they died after being baptized, and "Patrick put them under one mantle in one bed, and their friends bewailed them greatly." At intervals during these years in Connaught, St. Patrick often had recourse to long periods of mortification and prayer. The place he selected for his retirement was the very summit of Cruach Patrick, a mountain situated almost on the edge of the sea, some few miles from Westport in Mayo. Looking seaward, he had before him Clew Bay with its myriad islands; the roaring of the waves was in his ears, the winds howled and raged around his head, the rain fell as it can fall only on the western coast, and the fitful flashes of lightning lighted up the desolation and gloom. And high up above the heads and the homes of men, like Moses on Mount Sinai, he held solitary communion with God. He prayed much and long[2] for the conversion of those still in darkness, for the perseverance of the converted, for the prosperity of the infant Church.

From Connaught the Saint passed to Ulster, where his movements are traced through Donegal, Tirowen, Dalriada, in North Antrim, Dal Araidhe, in South Down, and Monaghan. In Tirowen he was hospitably entertained by the ruling prince Owen at his palace at Aileach, and at Monaghan he appointed Macarten Bishop of Clogher.[3] Afterwards he is to be found in Meath, where he visited Tara, and about the same time consecrated Fiacc Bishop of Leinster,[4] with his episcopal residence at Sletty. When he had traversed the other provinces, he entered Munster for the first time, and there, as in Connaught, he remained for seven years. Ængus, the King of Cashel, received him well, and himself and his people were baptized; similar success awaited him among the Deisi; and when he left Munster the greater part of the province had embraced

[1] *Tripartite*, vol. i. pp. 101-103. There is a tradition that on many occasions St. Patrick so used the Shamrock in his preaching.

[2] *Ibid.* vol. i. pp. 115-21.

[3] *Ibid.* vol. i. p. 177.

[4] *Ibid.* vol. i. p. 190.

Christianity. Returning from Munster, he passed through Leinster, on his way to Armagh, his life being twice attempted on the way. Once his charioteer was mistaken for him and was murdered; and farther north, a pagan chief, Maccuil, attempted unsuccessfully the life of "this shaveling who deceives every one." [1]

At Armagh, St. Patrick obtained land from a chieftain called Dare, and on this land he built a church and made Armagh the principal See of Ireland, a dignity which it still retains.

He could look back on a life of ceaseless activity in which great results had been achieved. He had traversed every district of Ireland; all classes had listened to his preaching, and from all classes converts had been made. He had met in argument and confounded his greatest enemies, the Druids. Brehons and poets, princes and kings had not only become his disciples, but in many cases his bishops and priests. A number of high-placed virgins, following the example of St. Bridget, had renounced the world and its pleasures and retired into the solitude of the cloister; many of them incurred the anger of their parents in doing so. He had, according to Nennius,[2] built 365 churches, consecrated an equal number of bishops, and ordained 3000 priests. He had held synods and passed decrees for the government and regulation of the Church, amongst others that well-known decree that whatever disputes could not be settled in Ireland were to be referred to Rome.[3] Whilst he yet lived, schools were established, convents and monasteries were being rapidly multiplied, the whole machinery

[1] *Tripartite*, vol. i. p. 221. This same Maccuil soon after became a Christian and preached the faith in the Isle of Man. *Vide* Dr. Healy's *Life and Writings of St. Patrick*, pp. 467-9.

[2] *Ibid.* vol. ii. p. 500.

[3] *Ibid.* vol. ii. p. 356. The words are "quaecumque causa valde difficilis exorta fuerit atque ignota cunctis Scotorum judicibus ad cathedram Abpi Hiberniensum, i.e. Patricii referenda, si vero in illa sanari non poterit talis causa praedictae negotionis ad sedem apostolicam decrevimus esse mittendam, i.e. ad Petri Apostoli cathedram auctoritatem Romae urbis habentem."

Photo A. R. Hogg.

THE GRAVE OF ST. PATRICK

DOWNPATRICK CATHEDRAL, CO. DOWN

of a prosperous Church was in active operation, and within a century after his landing in Ireland no less than 350 Irish lived whose names were enrolled among the saints.

Those who regard the Church as a mere human institution, and reject everything but human effort in the propagation of its doctrines, will ask with surprise and incredulity how all this could be accomplished by a single man. In the selection of persons to assist him, and in making use of what opportunities were thrown in his way, St. Patrick showed great wisdom. Knowing that the common people are like a flock of sheep, who will follow their leader, he addressed himself first to the kings and princes, and when their conversion was effected, the task with the people was less difficult. The Brehons and bards, the poets and historians, whose position and learning claimed the respect of the people, he appointed to offices in the Church; the Druids, if they became Christians, were treated similarly; but with Druidism itself he would have no parley and no compromise, feeling that between it and Christianity there existed an irreconcilable antagonism. He wished to disturb existing institutions as little as possible. The power of the princes, the privileges of the bards, the office and duties of the Brehons, the peculiar constitution of the sept and clan, were the same in Christian as in pagan times. Crom Cruach and his idols were replaced by the Christian Church with its cross; the priests and bishops succeeded the Druids; for the feast of Beltaine was substituted the festival of St. John, and for Samhan that of St. Martin. If the laws were revised under his supervision, as it appears they were,[1] it was not to abolish them altogether: it was rather to reduce them to order, to purge them of paganism, to bring them into harmony with the wants of Christianity.

Thus was the transition from paganism to the Gospel made easy. The piety of the Saint, his humility and poverty,

[1] This was done by a Committee of nine persons—three kings, Laeghaire, Corc, and Daire; three "Saints," Patrick, Benen (Benignus), and Carineach; and three antiquaries, Ross, Dubhthach, and Fearghus (*Four Masters*, at the year 438).

his sympathy with the distressed, his charity to the poor, his manifest sincerity, his self-sacrifice, must have attracted many towards him. Yet even all this will not explain how one so poor, without great learning or exalted birth, was able to overcome the fierce opposition of the Druids, to bring a whole nation to the faith, and to level to the dust the most venerated idols of paganism. It may be remembered that when St. Paul preached, it was not in the lofty strains of human eloquence: that it was Galilean fishermen, and not philosophers, who were selected to preach the Gospel through all lands: and when these things are remembered, St. Patrick will be more easily recognized as but a capable and willing instrument in the hands of the Divine Founder of his faith. The closing years of his life were spent at Saul, near Downpatrick, and during these years of retirement he wrote his *Confession*, and perhaps also his *Epistle to Caroticus*.[1] The *Confession* is an explanation of his own conduct and motives; the *Epistle* is addressed partly in entreaty, partly in anger, to a British prince who had pillaged the Irish coast and brought away some of the Christian Irish into captivity. Petrie gives the date of St. Patrick's death as 493.

The civil history of the period contains little worth recording. Like his predecessors, Niall and Dathi, Laeghaire continued to harass the Britons, and the sufferings of that afflicted people must have been great. In a petition for help to the Roman Consul (446), which was appropriately styled the "Groans of the Britons," they complain that they are entirely at the mercy of the Picts and Scots; and that while these savages drive them into the sea, the sea flings them back upon the land; so that theirs was the pitiable alternative, either to perish in the waves or be murdered upon land. But no help came from Rome. The resources of the Empire were strained to the utmost in the struggle with Attila, and while Italy and even Rome was menaced, Britain was forgotten. In this extremity the Britons appealed to the pirates of the

[1] He wrote two letters to Caroticus, but it is only the second of these which has survived.

German Ocean; and these came as mercenaries, but were soon strong enough to remain as masters. Henceforth the Irish king found it more prudent to cease his foreign depredations; yet at home he was not at peace, and in exacting the Boru tribute his relations with Leinster were those of perpetual and bitter conflict. Before his death (458) he relapsed into paganism, thinking that if he died a Christian he would insult the memory of his pagan ancestors. He was buried at Tara, standing erect, clothed in full armour,[1] his face turned towards the Leinstermen, so that in death, as in life, he would seem to menace his ancient foe. Of the two succeeding Ardris, Oilioll Molt, who died in 479, and Lughaidh, who reigned at the opening of the sixth century, we know nothing except that they were kings.

[1] This must have been nothing more than the usual dress he wore in battle. Chain armour was unknown in Ireland, and was not worn even at the battle of Clontarf.

CHAPTER VI

Progress of Religion and Learning

OF the many difficulties that surrounded the labours of St. Patrick, after his arrival in Ireland, one of the greatest was the want of a native ministry. Bishops and priests accompanied him on his coming to Ireland in 432, but they were from Britain and Gaul, and must have been totally, or at least partially, ignorant of the Irish tongue.[1] Bishops and priests were wanted who could preach to the unconverted in their own language and at the same time supply the needs of the converted. The want was soon partially supplied. Wherever St. Patrick found suitable candidates with the necessary amount of virtue and zeal, he made them part of his special following, had them taught as he went from place to place, and as soon as they were able to read the Scriptures, had even an elementary knowledge of the truths of Christianity, and were able to explain these truths to the people, no matter how rudely, he had them ordained priests.[2] To be able to read and write was necessary for the clergy, though little else was exacted. Nor were their outfit and personal belongings more imposing than their intellectual equipment. A priest had his catechism, his missal, his ritual for administering the sacraments, his copy of the Scriptures for preaching to the people; whilst a bishop had, in addition, a bell, a chalice, a crozier, and a leathern satchel in which his few books were contained.[3] Thus scantily dowered, and rich only in faith and zeal, these soldiers of the Cross went forth to wage war against the hosts of paganism.

But this primitive simplicity soon passed away. About

[1] Montalembert, *Monks of the West*, book viii. chap. 3.
[2] Healy, pp. 58-63. [3] *Ibid.* p. 64.

450 a college was founded at Armagh, of which St. Benignus was given charge, the great object of which was to train subjects for the priesthood. In that college were taught theology and the Scriptures, a knowledge of Latin and perhaps Greek was acquired, and to supply the various churches with books there was a special house in which students were employed as Scribes. In the opening years of the sixth century, the rector of the school of Armagh was Gildas, the historian of the Britons.[1] Under the auspices of St. Bridget and St. Conleth, a school was founded at Kildare; a school was founded at Noendrum by St. Mochua; whilst Moctha founded the school of Louth. These schools had soon an abundance of students, and the Church a supply of educated bishops and priests.

In each clan there was at least one bishop, perhaps more; for dioceses were not yet established, and a bishop's power was not restricted within certain territorial limits to the exclusion of all other bishops.[2] A grant of land was soon given the bishop by the clan, and here he built his church and his school, if he had one, and with the priests who assisted him, and the necessary retainers, who cultivated the land, here he lived. Of this little society, modelled on the clan, the bishop was the chief; but he sought for no personal indulgence and possessed no private wealth, for what property there was was the common property of all, and if he desired any ascendancy over those with whom he lived, it was only what might come from harder labour and greater austerities. These bishops and priests of necessity mixed much with the laity by whom they were surrounded, for they had to preach to them, to administer the sacraments, to adjust their differences (if that were possible), to sit in their assemblies and their banquet-halls.

There were many ardent natures to whom this condition of things was distasteful; and from the very first the spirit of monasticism existed in the Irish Church. St. Patrick was educated under St. Martin and St. Germanus, two famous monks; his co-workers in Ireland most likely grew up under

[1] Healy, pp. 117-20. [2] *Monks of the West*, book viii. chap. 3.

monastic influence, and in the churches they established, the bishop and his clergy in their mode of living, in their relations with each other, were not unlike the abbot and his monks. But to mingle in society and indulge in social intercourse is repugnant to the monastic state, for the very name monk suggests a solitary, who lives apart and alone, communing only with his God. Many wishing to be perfect embraced this state with all that it implied. Leaving everything—friends, family, and wealth—they retired to some unfrequented spot. The waters of the neighbouring river (they generally settled near a river) quenched their thirst; the herbs that grew on its banks satisfied the pangs of hunger. They fasted, they prayed, they wept for their own sins and the sins of others. Their only shelter was a few wattles covered with sods, and when night came they stretched their ill-clad bodies on the bare floor, and not unfrequently they slept in the open air. In a colder climate and amid harsher surroundings, there was soon repeated the wonders of the Egyptian desert. These solitaries soon became objects of veneration and awe, and the traveller, as he passed their little huts, crossed himself devoutly, muttered a prayer, and asked the holy man's blessing on his journey. But the monk's retreat was soon invaded, and no longer was he allowed the privilege of being alone. Others came, eager like himself for perfection. They came to share his poverty and mortifications, to copy his example, to be guided by his advice, to sit at his feet and learn wisdom. Each new-comer built his own hut; a church was constructed, a grant of land obtained, their master soon became their abbot, and usually their bishop, and they became his monks. It was thus, from such modest beginnings, that some of the most splendid monastic establishments took their rise.

Of these abbots, one of the most notable of the sixth century was St. Enda of Arran. Born about 450, and son of the King of Oriel, at his father's death he became king, but through the persuasion of his sister—St. Fanchea [1]—who was

[1] She was Abbess or Superioress of a convent near Enniskillen (Healy, p. 165).

a nun, he resigned the crown and became a monk. With that craving for solitude which was so characteristic of the period, he asked and obtained from his relative, the King of Munster, a grant of the Isles of Arran, in Galway Bay, and here he arrived in 484. For the purpose he had in view, for solitude, penance, and mortification, the place was not ill-chosen. The salt sea, the limestone rock, the sea-birds perched upon the cliffs, the seaweed and the fish—these are plentiful in Arran; but there is nothing else in abundance; the herbage is scant, the soil is light, the crops often fail; and from the midst of the melancholy ocean there comes year after year the pitiful cry of hunger. The narrow limits of these islands were too small for Enda's fame; it travelled across the sea to the mainland, and soon men came from all parts of Ireland to partake of his mortifications and sanctity. His disciples in a short time numbered one hundred and fifty; what they were at his death in 540 no one can tell; and of those who died the death of saints in Arran and lie buried in its consecrated soil the number is known only to God.[1] Their lives were of great self-denial. During the day they fished in the sea, or cultivated little patches of land among the rocks; others ground the meal and baked the bread; and when night came they retired to their little stone cells—beehive-shaped and never warmed by a fire. Wine they never tasted, meat hardly ever, and in prayer and mortification and the practice of the most rigid austerities their whole lives were spent.

Not less remarkable than St. Enda was St. Finian of Clonard. The son of a Leinster chief, and born in 470, he received most of his education in Wales, where he had as his schoolfellows, or perhaps as his teachers, St. David, St. Gildas, and St. Cadoc. Returning to Ireland in 510, he founded more than one monastery in Wexford and Wicklow; but in these places he lived with others, and his desire was to be alone. Leaving his monks, he retired to Clonard in Meath. His drink was the waters of the Boyne, on whose banks his

[1] It was called "Arran of the Saints" (Moran's *Essays*, p. 132); *vide* also Lanigan, chap. 10.

retreat was situated; his food was herbs and fish, his companions the wild beasts, his occupation the study of the Scriptures and prayer. His humility, his sanctity, his learning, his eloquence in expounding the Scriptures charmed and attracted many who came to visit him. His lonely retreat was soon invaded by those who wished to share his privations and to benefit by his teaching, other cells were built and inhabited, and but a short time elapsed until three thousand disciples looked to St. Finian as their master. Clonard became the most famous monastery in Ireland, and Finian the most famous teacher. Even Abbots who heard him were satisfied that from him they had much to learn. He has been called the tutor of the Irish Saints, and if the monks of the sixth century became Saints at Arran, they became scholars at Clonard. Columba of Iona, Canice of Kilkenny, Rhodanus of Lorrha, Brendan of Birr, Kevin of Glendalough,—all these were at one time or other at Arran or Clonard. Nor should Ciaran be omitted, who, in 540, founded the monastery and school at Clonmacnoise, a school which soon far exceeded in influence and importance even Clonard itself.

Much has been written of another of these pupils—Brendan of Clonfert—and many poetic legends have clustered round his name. He has been called Brendan, the Navigator. He was adventurous and daring, loved travel and change, and desired of all things to traverse the sea and discover unknown lands. By land he visited many of the great monasteries of Ireland, and from his native home in Kerry he launched his little currach on the deep. He visited the islands round the coast, crossed the Shannon, went as far as Wales, and penetrated even to Iona, to see his old friend Columba. Poetic legend speaks of his wanderings over the Atlantic, where far to the West he found a delightful isle, where the breezes were laden with celestial odours, where flowers of every hue grew in abundance, where neither rain nor hail nor frost was known, and where he was accosted by an angel of the Lord who commanded him to return to his native land. Whatever opinions there may be about this island, or about the luxuriance and

splendour of its vegetation, there can be no doubt about the luxuriant imagination of the poet.[1] In 560 Brendan founded a school and monastery at Clonfert, which afterwards acquired fame, and in 577 his wanderings on this earth ceased. In that year, in the monastery of Annaghdown in Galway, a monastery built on the edge of Lough Corrib, St. Brendan sank to rest.

But it was not only monks and their monasteries that flourished during that period. St. Patrick could boast in his *Confession* that many daughters of the Irish had renounced the pleasures of the world and lived as virgins, many in the face of strong and persistent opposition. Some of them lived with their friends, and in striking contrast to the dissipations and crimes around them, they prayed and fasted, chastised their bodies, and were anxious only for their souls. Others, like the sister of Benignus, were privileged, and regarded it as such, to wait upon St. Patrick and his companions. For the ever-increasing number of these virgins, retreats were required, where they could live in community subject to a common head and bound by a common rule. Of those who founded such retreats, the most remarkable was St. Bridget. Her father was Dubhthach, a Leinster chief, her mother was a slave in that chief's home, and Dubhthach's wife, jealous and angry that a slave should alienate from herself her husband's affection, insisted that the slave should be sold, and threatened that if such were not done she would leave her husband and insist upon taking her dowry with her. Bridget's mother was sold to a Druid, and it was in his house at Faughhart, near Dundalk, that Bridget was born, about 450. But when her mother was sold to the Druid it was stipulated that her offspring should be free, so that while Bridget was born in slavery, and the daughter of a slave, she was not a slave herself, and was allowed to return to her father's house, where she was baptized.[2] Her beauty was remarkable, and her worldly prospects bright, but society

[1] Healy, pp. 215-16. See also Rev. D. O'Donoghue's *St. Brendan the Voyager* (Dublin, 1895).

[2] Douglas Hyde, *Literary History of Ireland*, pp. 156-7.

had no attractions for her, she loved to fly from its allurements, would give all her father's property to the poor if allowed,[1] and long before her twentieth year she vowed to live and die a virgin. If all that appears in Lanigan's pages[2] be true, she founded several convents before settling in Kildare, and travelled much through Munster and Connaught. Finally, about 487, under the shadow of a great oak tree, she founded a convent in her father's territory at Kildare. Her charity, her humility, her hospitality to strangers brought visitors from all parts, and in a short time no church in Ireland was better known than Kildare, or the Church of the Oak. Besides her convent of nuns, she erected a monastery which soon became filled with monks, and a bishop—St. Conleth was the first—was appointed its head. He was appointed at the request of St. Bridget, but he received no jurisdiction from her, but from the Church; and the story that St. Bridget herself had spiritual jurisdiction over the monastery and its abbot, and that she received Holy Orders from Bishop Mel,[3] or from any other bishop, does not deserve to be treated seriously. She died in 523, more regretted than any saint since St. Patrick. Then, as now, the whole Irish race held her in the highest honour, and among Irishwomen she has always held the first place in their veneration and love. From Kildare she founded many convents. Her example was widely followed. St. Ita, St. Fanchea, and others also founded convents, and before the sixth century closed there were few districts in Ireland that had not their community of nuns.

As St. Bridget in her day was the first of Irishwomen, so the first of Irishmen was St. Columba. Born at Garten, in Donegal, in 521, in him were commingled the blood of the

[1] So displeased was her father at her extravagance in this respect, that he attempted to sell her as a slave to the King of North Leinster.

[2] Chap. 10.

[3] Olden, *The Church of Ireland*, p. 41. She received the religious veil from Bishop Macaille (Healy, p. 129), but this is entirely different from receiving the Sacrament of Orders, which a woman is incapable of receiving.

Irish and Scottish kings, and Dr. Reeves thinks [1] with some reason that to his high descent as much as to his abilities and sanctity was owing the enormous influence he enjoyed among his countrymen. He was educated, partly under Finian of Moville, partly at Clonard, partly at Arran, and partly at a monastery near Glasnevin. He embraced the clerical state, and in due course was ordained priest. His ambition was to be a monk, though he did not desire to live as a solitary but rather in community with other monks. In 545 he founded the monastery and church at Derry, eight years later that of Durrow in the Queen's County, and between this later date and 561 he must have founded many other monastic establishments, in all of which he exercised authority, for Reeves gives the names of no less than thirty-seven churches in Ireland which were either founded by him or in which his memory was specially venerated. He was largely, if not entirely, responsible for the battle of Cuildrevne (or Cuil-Dreimhne) (561), and for the bloodshed which it entailed—a strange thing for an abbot, who should set his monks an example of humility and forbearance; for a priest, whose mission was one of peace, and who might reasonably be expected to allay rather than arouse the fierce passions of revenge and war. But if his nature was passionate it was also generous; he deplored the harm he had done, and accepted as just the hard penance imposed by St. Molaise,[2] whom he consulted, that he should leave Ireland and live and die in a foreign land.

His biographer, Adamnan,[3] slurs over the battle of

[1] P. 8, note: "A member of the reigning family in Ireland, and closely allied to that of Dalriada in Scotland, he was eligible to the sovereignty of his own country." His half-uncle was on the throne at his birth, and he lived during the successive reigns of his cousins Domnhall, Fergus and Earby.

[2] Healy, p. 311. St. Molaise was St. Columba's confessor; he was of Innismurray Island, but at the time of the battle was at Ahamlish, only two miles from Cuildrevne.

[3] Reeves' *Adamnan*, p. 193. It seems he would have been excommunicated but for the intervention of St. Brendan of Birr, though Adamnan says he would be condemned for insufficient cause ("pro quibusdam veniabilibus et tam excusabilibus causis").

Cuildrevne as if Columba was in no way concerned. He states that his going to Iona was purely voluntary, though he makes mention of a synod in 562, when an attempt was made to have Columba excommunicated, presumably for his connection with the battle. Lanigan's denials are much more dogmatic and sweeping. He regards the whole story about Finian's book—the cause of the battle—as "unbecoming even the gravity of common history," and grows angry at the suggestion that Columba was in any way the cause of the battle; that he had therefore nothing to do penance for, and was not sent, but went voluntarily to Iona.[1] But the vehemence of Lanigan's language is more apparent than the soundness of his arguments; violent assertion cannot displace constant and venerated tradition nor weaken weighty authority; and if Columba did urge his kinsmen to battle, it only shows that he had the fierce passions and the quick resentments of his race, that as a consequence he did grievous wrong, for which, amid the solitude and desolation of Iona, he afterwards made noble atonement.

It was in 563 that Columba left Ireland and landed at Iona, which he received, it is said, as a gift from Conall, King of the Dalriadan colony of Caledonia. Situated but a mile from the great island of Mull, three miles in length, and between one and two in breadth, bleak, barren, desolate and lone, bounteous of rock, sparing of fertility, reluctant to yield but the scantiest of crops, its sides worn by the waves, its surface swept by the storms—such was Iona in Columba's time, and such is Iona still. Dr. Healy, who visited the place in recent years, has noted that in the whole island there is not a single tree;[2] but in Columba's time there were some osiers, and these served for the monks to build their church and their cells. Later on they built houses of wood,[3] but the timber

[1] Chapter 2; *Monks of the West*, book ix. chap. 1. Montalembert thinks it likely that Columba's excitable temper had led him into other crimes besides his share in this battle.

[2] P. 215. No tree, little tillage, and rocks everywhere.

[3] *Adamnan*, p. 177. Montalembert, book ix. chap. 1. "Great oaks

had to be brought from the neighbouring islands. The number of monks was soon increased by fresh arrivals from Ireland, and of the whole monastic establishment thus formed Columba was abbot—the first Abbot of Iona. But the limits of that island were not sufficient for his restless energies. He crossed over to Mull and traversed the whole district which in modern times is named Argyle, and which was then inhabited by the Irish or Dalriadan Scots. His kinsman, Conall, was king, the people were Christians; but, it appears, only in name, for they had few if any churches, and few if any monastic establishments. The want was supplied by Columba. Churches were built, monasteries established, filled with monks from Iona, and life and energy were infused into that faith which was almost dead.

Columba was not yet satisfied. Eastward of the Dalriadan colony and northward, beyond the Grampians, dwelt a people called the Picts. Their origin is uncertain. They may have been of Scythian, or perhaps of Sarmatian, origin, but when the light of history is first thrown upon Caledonia they are found there. Fierce and brave, they differed somewhat from the Scots, but they had the same desire of shedding blood, "and all more eager to shroud their villainous faces in bushy hair than to cover with decent clothing those parts of their body which required it."[1] A terror to the Britons, a danger to the Romans, they had frequently devastated Roman territory; and the valour with which, under the heroic leadership of Galgacus, they defended their liberty against the legions of Agricola, has been recorded with admiration by Tacitus.[2] They were pagans, worshipping the sun and moon, and holding in special reverence certain fountains and wells. These Picts Columba now determined to convert to the faith, and neither the ferocity of the people themselves nor the almost inaccessible regions in which they dwelt

such as the sterile and wind-beaten soil of their islet could not produce had to be brought from the neighbouring shore."

[1] *Six Old English Chronicles*, p. 307 (Gildas' *History of the Britons*). Gildas is plainly embittered by the recollection of what his own countrymen suffered from these same Picts and Scots.

[2] *Agricola*, cap. 35-37.

could serve as an obstacle to his intrepid zeal. He crossed the Grampians, sailed in his light-built skiff through the Ness, sought out the people in their homes, and entered as an unwelcome guest the palace of their king beyond Inverness.[1] His energy, his earnestness, his enthusiasm, the purity and simplicity of his life, his ardent charity, his sympathy for suffering, his miracles brought conviction even to Pictish minds. Brude, the king, became a Christian, his people, not all at once, but gradually, followed his example, and before Columba died there was no portion of these savage regions, from the Grampians to the Hebrides, from the Hebrides to the Orkneys, in which Christians were not to be found.[2] In these journeys by land and sea Columba spent much of his time, the remainder being spent at Iona with his monks.

At first these monks were all Irish, but gradually others came from the Dalriadan Scots, from the Britons, from the Saxons. All lived together within an encircling and protecting rampart, each having his own cell. Within this enclosure also were the carpenter's shop and the smith's forge, the refectory, the hospice, and—most important of all—the church ; whilst outside was the mill, as well as shelter for horses and cattle. Adamnan speaks of the monk as a soldier, his enemies being his own corrupt passions, and the weapons he had to use being labour, mortification and prayer. In Iona these weapons were not allowed to rust. It was the monks who tilled the fields, gathered the crops, threshed and ground the corn, and baked the bread ; and while some worked in the forge or carpenter's shop, others fished in the surrounding sea, or, perhaps, shared with Columba the toils and hardships of his journeys. Nor was study neglected, and Adamnan's writings show that in his time at least the Latin and Greek languages were cultivated with success. Prayer was said in common at certain stated

[1] *Adamnan*, pp. 151-2. One of his difficulties was that he did not understand the Pictish language, for it was different from the Irish, and when a Pict came to him at Skye to get baptized, their conversation had to be carried on through an interpreter (*Adamnan*, p. 62).

[2] *Ibid.* p. 295.

times during the day, and sometimes in the night the bell sounded and the monks rose from sleep and passed into the church to pray. Celibacy was strictly observed, silence was enjoined and practised, humility was carried so far that the monk made his request to the abbot on bended knees, and to the abbot's commands there was rendered by all a strict and unquestioned obedience. There were many rigorous fasts. Every Wednesday and Friday, and every day during Lent, except Sundays and holidays, only one meal was taken.[1]

Neither Columba nor the succeeding abbots were bishops, "an unusual arrangement," says Bede;[2] but there was always a bishop in the community, who had, however, no jurisdiction, and was there only to confer Orders. In the monastery at Iona and in the other houses of the Order as well, both in Scotland and Ireland, the Abbot of Iona was supreme. But the rule of Columba was mild, and the relations between him and his monks were those of an affectionate father to his children. He shared their labours in the fields, fasted with even greater rigour than they, and it is said that each evening while reading the Scriptures he remained plunged in cold water, a torture which few would be able to endure. When not otherwise engaged he transcribed books, for he wished that each of his churches would have a supply of books. "There was not an hour," says Adamnan, "in which he was not engaged either in prayer, or reading, or writing, or some other useful work."

To his monastery at Iona many strangers came to visit Columba, to seek his advice and be consoled by him in their afflictions. They came from the Caledonian Scots, from the

[1] The whole life at Iona, with the various incidents which made it up, is dealt with in the Additional Notes to *Adamnan* (pp. 342 *et seq.*), most valuable notes, which have been gathered together by Dr. Reeves with much care and learning.

[2] *Ecclesiastical History*, book iii. chap. 4. "That island (Iona) has for its ruler an abbot who is a priest, to whose direction all the province, and even the bishops, contrary to the usual method, are subject according to the example of their first teacher."

Picts, from the Saxons, as well as from Ireland. All were welcome and all were hospitably entertained, but it was those who came from Ireland who received the warmest greeting of all, for he loved Ireland with a passionate love—this first of the exiles of Erin. The story that he was never to *see* Ireland, this being part of his penance, and that when he did go to Ireland he was blindfolded, is very likely without foundation. But his visits to Ireland were few—once to attend the Convention of Druim Ceat and a few times to visit the monasteries of his Order.[1] And to be away from Ireland he considered the hardest part of his lot,[2] and exile from Ireland was, to his mind, for an Irishman, the hardest penance he could impose. In his native land everything was dear to him—its mountains and valleys, its rivers and lakes, the song of its birds, the gentleness of its youth, the wisdom of its aged; he loved to steer his bark round its coast and to see the waves break upon its shore.[3] He thought that death in Ireland was preferable to life in any other land; and when an Irishman was leaving Iona for Ireland he regarded him almost with envy as he pathetically said to him, "You are returning to the country which you love." When Columba died at Iona (597), without doubt there passed away the most remarkable Irishman that the sixth century had seen.

At the opening of the seventh century almost all traces of paganism had disappeared in Ireland. There were, no doubt, a few pagans still, but their number was so small, their influence so insignificant, that they may be altogether disregarded; the nation was now fully Christian, and the Church had attained a degree of strength and splendour unequalled in any country of Western Europe. Scattered over the land were many great monasteries with a population equal to that of an ordinary-sized

[1] "When he went from his own monastery at Durrow to visit Clonmacnoise, the whole community went out to meet him, and such was the veneration in which he was held, that we welcomed him as if he was an angel of God" (*Adamnan*, p. 24).

[2] Healy, p. 313.

[3] *Monks of the West*, book ix. chap. 2; *Adamnan*, pp. 285-7 (Additional Notes).

town. In these monasteries the most famous of her children first learned and then taught, and, acquiring for themselves the fame of sanctity and learning, conferred it on the monastic schools in which they were trained and in which they taught. Nor was it only Irish students with whom the Irish monasteries were filled. From the kindred Scots of Caledonia, from the Saxons and Britons, and from Gaul many students came, attracted by the fame of the Irish schools, and desirous to obtain in these schools that knowledge which they found it impossible to obtain at home. Among the hospitable Irish these foreign students were treated well. "The Irish," says Bede,[1] "willingly received them all and took care to supply them with food, and also to furnish them with books to read, and gave them their teaching gratis."

We do not know so much of the purely secular schools where laymen taught and laymen learned, but that such schools existed, and that, especially after the Convention of Druim Ceat, when they were organized on a new and better basis, they reached a high degree of efficiency, is undoubted.[2] In these schools were taught poetry, history, and law, and the training was long and arduous before degrees in these subjects could be obtained. To know the laws that were passed and the judgments of famous Brehons that were given, and to interpret them in accordance with justice, was the business of the Brehons; to record events —usually in verse—was the business of the historian; but on the poet a harder task was imposed. With all forms of poetry he should be perfectly familiar, and when asked by his chief, or king, to compose, no matter what the theme given, he should be always ready.[3] Battles fought, wars undertaken, voyages and forays, the glories of his chief, the praise of heroes, an elegy for the dead, or again some wild tale, where giants and fairies jostled each other and fact and fable were intermingled—such were in turn his themes.

[1] *Ecclesiastical History*, book iii. chap. 27.

[2] Hyde, *Literary History of Ireland*, p. 241.

[3] Healy, p. 599; O'Curry, *MS. Materials of Ancient Irish History*, p. 240.

Hundreds, perhaps thousands, of these tales existed when the Danes came, but they perished by their destroying hands, and but a few, and for the most part only fragments, have survived. The best known of these, which have withstood alike the attacks of time and the destroying fury of the Dane, is the *Tain-bo-Chuailgne*, or, as it is sometimes called, *The Foray of Queen Maeve* (or Méadhbh).[1] That the Queen of Connaught should bring her whole army into Ulster for no other purpose except to seize a bull which was somewhat better-looking than one her husband had in his possession, is a sufficiently extravagant and improbable conception; but poetry does not always deal with probability, or with facts, and frequently has to rely upon imagination for its materials; and it would be difficult to find in the whole range of fiction a character to match Cuchulain. On his native Ulster the curse of the goddess Macha has fallen, and its blighting effect is peculiar and fatal, for it has turned brave men into cowards and wise men into fools. From a land stricken with cowardice and imbecility to seek for help in a great emergency is vain. One man alone, equal to a host in arms, remains to defend Ulster; and neither the Horatii, who kept the bridge, nor Hector defending his beloved Ilion, nor Achilles gaining victory for the Greeks, is a more commanding, or even a more pathetic, figure than this "watch-hound watching by Uladh's gate."[2] Day after day at the Ford, which marks the boundary of his native Ulster, he meets in single combat the best and most renowned champions in Maeve's army, and they fall, one after the other, by the might of his invincible arm; and he slays them, not in hatred or in vengeance, not because he wishes their death and rejoices at the sight of their blood, but because stern necessity has willed it, and it is the only way in which his native province can be saved.[3]

[1] *Poetical Works of Aubrey de Vere*, vol. ii. pp. 255-343.

[2] De Vere, p. 262.

[3] *Ibid.* p. 305. He is especially sorry for the death of his old friend Ferdia:

> We ate together of the self-same dish,
> We couched together 'neath the self-same shield,
> Now living man I stand and he lies dead.

What other works were written by laymen cannot be known, but Dallan Forgaill wrote an elegy on St. Columba.[1] It was Senchan, who had been Dallan's pupil, and who succeeded him as Chief Poet of Ireland, who, though he did not write the *Tain-bo-Chuailgne* himself, at least discovered it after it had been lost;[2] and Cennfaeladh, warrior, lawyer, and poet, who died in 678, wrote some poems, a grammar, and a law tract, and was so accomplished a scholar that he was called the learned.[3] It is, however, the monastic schools of the period which were most appreciated in their own day and are best known in ours. In efficiency and influence the first of the monastic schools was that of Clonmacnoise. Founded by St. Ciaran in 544, it was situated on the Leinster side of the Shannon, some seven miles from Athlone, and one circumstance which favourably influenced its development was that it belonged to no particular tribe.[4] Freed from local jealousies and restrictions, it was patronized by various tribes, endowed by various princes, and outstripping the mere local fame of other monastic schools, it acquired the dignity and strength of a national college. The Kings of Meath and Connaught—Diarmuid and Guaire—who in life were so often ranged in hostile camps, agreed in their veneration for Clonmacnoise; both endowed it with land, and when they died, both, in accordance with a long-expressed wish, were interred in its consecrated ground. Of its professors we read of Colgu, who wrote both in Latin and in Irish, and who died in 794;[5] and Suibhne, another of its professors, who lived in the next century, is described by a Saxon contemporary—Florence of Worcester[6]—as "the greatest doctor of the Scots." It is not certain, but it is not improbable, that among its students was Alcuin, the friend of Charlemagne, whose reputation for scholarship was European—at all events he writes of Colgu as his master and father.[7] Another student was Dicuil, who wrote in Latin an

[1] *Literary History of Ireland*, p. 380.
[2] *Ossianic Society*, vol. v. p. 125.
[3] Healy, pp. 603-4. [4] *Ibid.* p. 270. [5] *Ibid.* p. 272.
[6] Florence's *Chronicle*, at the year 892. [7] Usher's *Sylloge*, No. 18.

interesting treatise on geography.[1] Even during the Danish wars Clonmacnoise flourished, but being plundered and attacked so often, its efficiency was seriously impaired; but when the Danish power was broken and Danish depredations had ceased, the venerable school renewed its vigour and shone out with some of its ancient splendour.

Throughout Ulster and Meath were the monastic schools established by Columba and his successors, all of which were in subjection to the Abbots of Iona, and of these Durrow and Kells are best known. In both the work of copying manuscripts was much practised, and the art of illuminating manuscripts carried to high perfection. Judging that no efforts were too much in copying and decorating the sacred books, these monks, in the lonely silence of their convent cells, patiently, unceasingly, unsparing of labour, and with an artist's eye for colours, copied and ornamented, and the *Book of Kells* and the *Book of Durrow* are still in existence to tell the tale of their labour and their skill. It was not the desire of Giraldus —it did not seem to be his mission—to say anything favourable of Ireland, or anything Irish, and if he does praise he may certainly be believed, for his praise is so rare and given with such evident, even painful, reluctance. But he saw the *Book of Kells*, and, struck with the beauty and finish of the lettering and colouring, he concluded it was the work of an angel, for it could not be the work of human hands.[2] In these schools, subject to Columba's successors, no scholar of eminence appeared previous to the advent of the Danes, if we except Adamnan, ninth Abbot of Iona. Descended from the princes of Tirconnell, and therefore related to St. Columba, he was born at Donegal in 624, became monk and priest, and ultimately Abbot of Iona, a position he held till his death in 704. His high descent, his position as Columba's successor, his great learning, his eminent sanctity, gave him immense influence with his countrymen; nor did he ever use this

[1] Healy, p. 281.

[2] Giraldus speaks of a book at Kildare, but Petrie thinks that his references are to the *Book of Kells* (*Topography*, Distinction ii. chap. 38).

influence except for the advantage of his country and his religion. Seeing the absurdity of the Irish Church cutting herself adrift from the rest of the Christian world, even in matters of discipline, he laboured hard to induce the monks of his own Order to conform to the Roman system of computing Easter. Against discouragement and obstinacy he battled earnestly and long, and at last, towards the close of his own earthly career, he had the satisfaction of seeing the Columban monasteries of Ireland fall into line with the rest of the Irish Church, in adopting the Roman Easter. Iona had not, even at his death, abandoned its ancient and erroneous system, and it appeared that there at least his arguments and entreaties were vain. But the good seed had been sown though it had not yet borne fruit, and Adamnan was but a few years in his grave when Iona also yielded and carried out the wishes of its distinguished abbot. At the last Feis of Tara he was enabled to have a law passed, since known as Adamnan's Law, prohibiting women from taking part in battle. Nor was it only among his own countrymen that he was respected. The exiled King of Northumbria, Aldfrid, during his stay in Ireland, met and loved the learned monk of Iona,[1] and afterwards, when fortune changed and when the exile became the monarch, Adamnan was able to use his influence with advantage to his own countrymen. The prisoners taken in Ireland, in the time of Egfrid, were kept in Northumbria in the position of slaves, and when Aldfrid became king, Adamnan journeyed from Iona, crossing the dangerous currents of the Solway Firth, and appealing to the new king, in his palace at Northumbria, he had the Irish prisoners released and sent back to their country and kin.[2]

Of Adamnan's great piety and learning no doubt has ever been raised, and of his character strangers as well as Irishmen have ever spoken with respect. Passing by native estimates of him, which might be charged with partiality, we

[1] *Adamnan*, Appendix to Preface, p. 44; he was often called the Alumnus of Adamnan.

[2] *Adamnan*, p. 186; Introd. p. 45.

have the testimony of Bede that "he was a virtuous and learned man, with a profound knowledge of the Scriptures."[1] And of his principal work,[2] *The Life of St. Columba*, Pinkerton, a learned Scotchman, has said that "it is the most complete piece of such biography that Europe can boast of during the whole Middle Ages,"[3] a generous eulogy for a Scotchman to pronounce, especially in dealing with anything Irish. Thus far for the Columban monasteries, which were for the most part in the north of Ireland.

But if we would search for the greatest of the Northern monastic schools, we shall not find it among those of the Columban Order, but rather in the School of Bangor, built on the shores of Belfast Lough, and looking out upon the ever-restless sea. Founded by St. Comgall (559), it soon grew in influence and importance, and before Comgall died three thousand monks observed his rule, the larger portion of whom were in Bangor itself.[4] Columbanus and Gall were educated there in the sixth century; so also, in the ninth century, was Dungal, who did such service against the Iconoclasts; and, at a later stage, St. Malachy, the bishop and reformer of Armagh.

What Bangor was to the north, Lismore was to the southern province. It was founded by Carthage in the year 635. For forty years Carthage had already laboured at Rahan, in the King's County. He had founded a monastery there, it had grown to fame under his rule, its schools attracted scholars from afar, and no less than eight hundred monks were gathered within its bounds. But jealousy sometimes enters the cloister; the monastery of Durrow was near and was being overshadowed by its neighbour at Rahan; its monks felt that Carthage was the cause; they were influential with the ruling prince of the territory and induced him to expel Carthage from Rahan, which

[1] *Ecclesiastical History*, book v. chap. 15.

[2] Adamnan also wrote a book on the Holy Places of Jerusalem, a work highly praised by Bede, and from which he largely quotes (chaps. 16, 17).

[3] Healy, p. 343.

[4] Lanigan's *Ecclesiastical History*, vol. ii. p. 62.

that prince did, with every circumstance of indignity.[1] Seeking a new home, Carthage travelled much, and at last the wanderer found rest at Lismore, and in the midst of scenic beauty of a high order he built his monastery. Looking southwards he had behind him the mountains of Knockmeildown, around him was the valley of the Blackwater, where Nature had been prodigal of her charms, and at his feet was the river itself rushing ever onward to the sea.[2] The new school acquired fame so rapidly that it soon overshadowed all the schools of Munster, and many were its famous scholars. Aldfrid, the Northumbrian king, was educated there; among its monks was Turlogh, King of Thomond, who resigned the crown in order to become a monk; and among its best-known students was Cathaldus, Bishop of Tarentum.[3] At Cork and Ross, at Mungret and Inniscaltra, were other schools in Munster, but none of them attained the position or acquired the fame of Lismore. The schools of Kildare, Clonenagh, and Glendalough diffused the blessings of knowledge and religion throughout Leinster, while Connaught had the schools of Clonfert, Tuam, and Mayo.

With the life and labours of St. Kevin, Glendalough has been always associated, and Clonenagh beheld its most distinguished student in Ængus the Culdee.[4] Except that the school of Tuam was founded by St. Jarlath, there seems to be no other distinction

[1] Healy, p. 450. "It was a cruel and an evil deed—it broke the old man's heart and brought down his grey hairs in sorrow to the grave." Nor has Dr. Healy any great doubt that jealousy was the cause of the Saint's expulsion.

[2] *Ibid.* p. 453. [3] *Ibid.* pp. 457-69.

[4] He was a member of the Community of Tallaght, where, under the rule of St. Maelruan, a stricter monastic discipline was observed than then prevailed in the other monasteries of the time. As a member of this community he would be specially entitled to call himself Ceile-de or servant of God. His personal sanctity would emphasize his claim to be so called. In his case the term *culdee* may be supposed as a term denoting "rigid monastic observance, especially in the order of divine service, and to have been applied to him as one who had contributed to the devotional compositions of the Church, and also lived according to the strictest sect of his religion" (Reeves' "The Culdees," R.I. Academy *Trans.* vol. xxiv. p. 127). Vide *The Felire of Ængus*, edited by Stokes (R.I. Academy publication).

to which it can lay claim. Mayo, founded by St. Coleman and tenanted by those Saxon monks who still adhered to the old Irish Easter, was not without distinction, and was so much frequented by Saxons that it was called Mayo of the Saxons. The founder of Clonfert was Brendan the Navigator, and one of its abbots was Cummian, who in the Paschal controversy acquitted himself so well.

Our conception of an Irish monastery in those days is a number of buildings, grouped together and surrounded by an enclosure within which dwelt a multitude of pious, self-denying men, living in community, practising the same devotions, undergoing the same hardships, chastising themselves with the same mortifications, bound by a common rule and subject to the same Superior, whose will they recognized as law. These monks differed according to the time in which they lived. An ancient Catalogue of the Irish Saints quoted by Usher [1] divides these Saints into three Orders. The First Order [2] was in the time of St. Patrick, consisted of holy bishops, 350 in number; founders of churches, worshipping one head, viz. Christ; following one leader, Patrick; having one tonsure and one celebration of Mass, and one Easter, which they celebrated after the Vernal Equinox. "They did not reject the service of women, because, being grounded on Christ, the Rock, they feared not the wind of temptation." In the Second Order there were few bishops but many priests, in number 300; they had different rites for celebrating and different rules of living; and they shunned the society of women, and excluded them from their monasteries. The Third Order, 100 in number, were priests but few bishops; they lived on herbs and alms, and despised all things earthly. They had different rites for celebrating and a different tonsure, for some had the crown shaven, but others had not. The time of the First Order was to the middle of the sixth century; the Second Order to the end of the same century; while the time of the Third Order extended to the year of the great plague

[1] *Works*, vol. vi. pp. 477-9.

[2] Most of the First Order were foreigners—Franks, Romans, and Britons (Healy, pp. 107-8).

GLENDALOUGH

AFTER W. H. BARTLETT

(664). The First Order in sanctity shone out resplendent like the sun, the Second shone like the moon, the Third like the stars. Most of these saints belonged to monasteries, but not all, for there were some fervent souls who loved even greater privations than those prescribed by monastic rule, and this, it seems, was a special characteristic of the later Order of Saints. Solitude, silence, the severest penances, the most rigid fasts, the greatest mortifications—these were what they chose for their earthly inheritance. They were anchorets rather than monks.

In the valley of Glendalough St. Kevin lived for seven years the life of a solitary, "without fire, without a roof, almost without human food."[1] On the shores of a lake in that beautiful valley he dwelt for a time in the hollow of a tree, and St. Kevin's bed, where his short periods of sleep were taken, can still be seen—a cave in the face of an overhanging cliff, only four feet square and little more than four feet high. The natural beauties of Glendalough and the picturesque ruins in which it abounds attract many visitors; and the thoughtful traveller, as he thinks of St. Kevin sleeping up the face of the cliff, like the eagle in his eyrie, cannot help contrasting the material ages of a later date with those far-off ages of vivid faith. To these scenes of silence and solitude St. Kevin was attached, for they allowed him to hold undisturbed communion with God; but a shepherd, who came to look after his flocks, broke the silence of his retreat. Many others followed in his footsteps; the Saint was no longer allowed to remain alone; and the entreaties of his visitors that he should leave his lonely abode were so earnest and persistent, that at last he reluctantly did so, and, farther down the valley, he built a monastery, which soon grew to eminence as the monastery and school of Glendalough, and in which many a scholar and holy man were trained. For eighteen months before his death, St. Carthage of Lismore retired from his monks and lived alone in a cave;[2] and Ængus the Culdee lived for a time in a solitude near the present town of Maryborough, and every day recited fifty psalms in his cell, fifty in the open air, and fifty

[1] Healy, pp. 418 *et seq.* [2] *Ibid.* p. 454.

with his body plunged in cold water.[1] Many other holy men there were, whose austerities were as great but whose names are less known.

But Irish monks and anchorets, Irish saints and scholars were not during the period confined to Ireland. The work commenced by Columba was continued by his successors; the monastery of Iona was incessantly recruited from Ireland; and of its first twelve abbots all but one were Irish and of the race of Tirconnell.[2] Among the kindred Scots of Argyle, monasteries arose which were filled with Irish monks and which became centres of missionary activity themselves. These monks of Iona extended their labours among the southern Picts on the east coast, and in these regions, where Ninian first taught and laboured, the flickering embers of the Christian faith were kindled into flame by Irish zeal.[3] The Picts beyond the Grampians heard the tidings of Christianity from the same Irish monks, and were persuaded by Irish lips to forsake for ever their heathen gods. Nor were these zealous preachers dismayed by the stormy and treacherous seas that rage round the western and northern shores of Caledonia. The numerous islands on these coasts were visited, churches built, and the people won over from their pagan errors; nor did these adventurous soldiers of the Cross desist until they had passed the Ultima Thule of the ancients; and from the testimony of Dicuil the geographer, they penetrated to Iceland, where the Northmen, on their arrival there in the ninth century, found Irish crosses, Irish croziers and Irish bells.[4]

With equal energy and success they laboured among the

[1] Healy, p. 407. Vide *The Felire of Ængus* (the Irish Prefaces, viii.).

[2] *Adamnan*, p. 342. The genealogical table given by Reeves, though it does not, as the author points out, show that the abbacy of Iona was transmitted in lineal succession, "it demonstrates the existence of clanship even in a religious community."

[3] It has been observed that St. Patrick in his *Epistle to Caroticus* speaks with special severity of the Picts, who—at least the Southern Picts—had been converted to Christianity but soon after relapsed into paganism (Morris's *St. Patrick*, p. 228).

[4] Healy, p. 289.

Anglo-Saxons. Just south of the Southern Picts was Northumbria, extending from the Firth of Forth to the mouth of the Humber. Its British and Christian inhabitants had been driven into the mountains of Wales, or reduced to slavery in their own land by the new pagan masters of Northumbria. Feeling bitterly the humiliation of defeat and the harsh treatment they received, they entertained the strongest antipathy to the Anglo-Saxons; and while they enjoyed the consolations of Christianity themselves, they refused with sullen selfishness to share its blessings with their conquerors.[1] The patience and zeal of Paulinus had won over the Northumbrian king Edwin and many of his people to Christianity, but the triumph of the Gospel was short-lived. Hatred often brings men together when love has failed, and in their hatred of the Anglo-Saxons the Britons willingly enrolled themselves under the banner of Penda, the pagan king of Mercia, who had long coveted the Northumbrian province. The allied forces marched into Edwin's kingdom, and at Hatfield (633) he was disastrously overthrown, and once more Northumbria relapsed into paganism. A few years later, when Oswald became king of Northumbria, these disasters were reversed; he shook off the yoke of the Mercians and Britons, and Northumbria was again free. In exile among the Scots he had learned to become a Christian, and when he became independent king of Northumbria, he invited the monks of Iona to re-establish Christianity in his kingdom. Aidan[2] and some monks came and founded a monastery at Lindisfarne, of which Aidan became abbot, as well as being bishop. More fortunate than Paulinus, the work of these Irish missionaries was destined to endure. Lindisfarne became another Iona, whence other monasteries, such as Whitby and Melrose, were founded, and whence zealous missionaries went forth to preach the Gospel.

[1] *Monks of the West*, book viii. chap. 2; Bede, book ii. chap. 22.

[2] Of Aidan and his companions Bede speaks with enthusiasm (book iii. chap. 5): "It was the highest commendation of his doctrine with all men, that he taught no otherwise than he and his followers had lived—he delighted in distributing immediately among the poor whatever was given him by kings and rich men."

The surrounding people were hard to convert and clung with stubbornness to their pagan errors, but the piety, the patience, the missionary activity, the self-sacrifice of these Irish monks conquered all. Within twenty years after Aidan's coming to Lindisfarne, Northumbria was entirely Christian. Essex and Mercia were also converted exclusively by Irish monks, who, besides, shared with the Roman monks the labour and glory of converting Wessex and East Anglia. "They rivalled," says Montalembert, "the zeal of the Roman monks, but showed much more perseverance and gained much more success."[1]

In continental Europe Irish missionaries also laboured and with conspicuous success. Towards the close of the sixth century, there left Ireland and passed over to France an Irish monk whose fame was to rival that of Columba. Like him he was to be the founder of many monasteries and the spiritual father of many children. This was St. Columbanus. Born in Leinster (559) and educated at Bangor, he became monk and priest, and selecting foreign lands as the scene of his labours, he left Ireland with twelve companions (590), crossed over to England, and arrived in France the same year. He and his companions made their way to the kingdom of Burgundy, where they were well received by Gontran, its king. Here, first at Annegray and afterwards at Luxeuil, Columbanus established monasteries, by far the most famous of which was Luxeuil. Situated under the shadow of the Vosges Mountains, the place was of some importance in Roman times, and some remains were left of Roman temples and villas.[2] The tide of barbarian conquest had so often rolled over the district that, except these ruined buildings, every trace of ancient culture had disappeared. The fields were uncultivated, agriculture was neglected, the forests had extended their sway, and the rule of the wild beast had supplanted that of man. Nor was the physical aspect of the country an inapt representation of its moral and religious condition. The fervour of those warlike converts who fought with Clovis at Tolbiac had not been transmitted to their descendants; many of the people had relapsed into paganism;

[1] *Monks of the West*, book xi. chaps. 1 and 2. [2] *Ibid.* book vii.

the secular clergy were remarkable for everything but zeal; the bishops did not hold synods;[1] the nobles were little better than hunters and robbers; and a descendant of Clovis and the pious Clotilde, shrinking from the obligations and restraints of matrimony, lived, like an Eastern monarch, with his concubines. In contrast with this irreligion and immorality the most heroic virtue soon appeared. Columbanus and his companions lived with the wild beasts, and with as little luxury. The grass of the fields, the wild fruit, the bark of the trees were partly their support;[2] the charity of their neighbours supplied the rest. This was before Luxeuil was built; but even in Luxeuil the mortification was great, for the rule of Columbanus was severe. Prayer and labour were incessant, but one meal was allowed in the day, and for what in later times would be considered a trivial fault the most rigorous penances were imposed. Yet these rigours attracted rather than repelled the surrounding natives. The serfs found refuge at Luxeuil and were received among its monks, and the long-haired nobles of the Franks and Burgundians left their castles and their lands, and as monks were rarely the superiors, frequently the equals, and sometimes the inferiors and subjects, of their former slaves. Luxeuil soon became the most populous monastery in Gaul, and the heart of Columbanus must have been glad.

But the Saint was not without his sorrows. With perverse obstinacy he still clung to the Irish method of computing Easter. The Gaulish bishops remonstrated. Columbanus advised them with some asperity to hold synods more frequently, and thus the relations between the bishops and the monk were never cordial and often strained.[3] But with the young king, Thierry, who now sat upon the throne of Gontran, and his grandmother Brunehault his difficulties were greater still.

[1] Gibbon, vol. ii. pp. 562-3.

[2] Healy, p. 373. Columbanus loved to retire into the forest away from his monks, and there he became familiar and friendly with the wild animals. "The birds would pick the crumbs from his feet; the squirrels hide themselves under his cowl; the hungry wolves harmed him not; he slept in a cave where a bear had its den" (Healy).

[3] *Ibid.* pp. 374-5.

Thierry had Christian instincts, and if he could have escaped from the corrupting influence of his grandmother, he would have lived as became a Christian king. But his will was weak and that of Brunehault was strong. Greedy of absolute power, blind to religious obligations, deaf to the voice of nature itself, she encouraged Thierry to keep concubines instead of sharing his throne with a lawful queen. The struggle between this wicked old woman and Columbanus was bitter and prolonged. Fearless of danger, negligent of consequences, with the zeal of an apostle and the courage of a martyr, he attacked both Brunehault and Thierry, menaced them with the vengeance of Heaven; and of morality and the sanctity of marriage was ever the most intrepid champion. For a time force triumphed. Columbanus was expelled from Luxeuil, and sent as far as Nantes on his way to Ireland. Thierry had made all necessary preparations for sending him away, and at Nantes a vessel was waiting to convey him back to Ireland, much against his will. But the forces of Nature themselves seemed to be enlisted on his side. As if in anger with his persecutors, the sea was violently agitated, the winds blew their strongest, the waves threatened to engulf the vessel, and more than once it was flung back upon the strand. The master of the vessel, terrified and conquered in this contest with Nature, at last dropped his troublesome passenger and Columbanus was allowed to go free. He turned his steps into Neustria, thence to Austrasia, and finally settled at Bregenz, on Lake Constance, where, with his friend St. Gall, he laboured for two years. In 612 Thierry defeated Theodobert and became master of Helvetia, and Columbanus had to fly from his ancient enemy. Crossing the Alps, he entered Lombardy, where he was well received and where he established a monastery at Bobbio, which he made "the citadel of orthodoxy against the Arians, and lighted there a focus of knowledge and instruction which was long the light of Northern Italy." Before his death, in 615, Columbanus could count many monasteries which observed his monastic rule,[1] but before

[1] Columbanus's *Penitential*, which was compiled for the use of his monks, is founded largely on the *Penitential of St. Finian*, and adopts 23

the seventh century closed they had become more numerous and were filled with more monks than he could ever in life have contemplated even in his wildest dreams. Lure and Roman-Moutier, Beze and St. Ursanne and Remiremont in Burgundy; Fontenelle and Joumieges on the Seine; Jouarre and Rebais on the Marne; Leuconnais near Amiens; St. Centule on the Somme; St. Bertin among the Morini,—these were only some of the monasteries founded by the zealous children of Luxeuil in France and Belgium; whilst in Switzerland St. Gall succeeded so well, that his memory is still revered as the greatest of her Christian missionaries, and a town and Canton of Switzerland still bear the name of St. Gall.[1]

Not less zealous than the disciples of Columbanus were other Irishmen who laboured in continental lands. An Irishman,[2] Fridolin, founded a monastery at Sackingen on the Rhine as early as 511, and preached to the inhabitants on both banks of the river; St. Fiacre[3] preached the Gospel and cultivated the fields near Meaux. St. Fursey, laborious preacher and famous visionary, ruled as abbot on the banks of the Marne (633).[4] St. Kilian suffered martyrdom for the

of its Canons, Columbanus adding to these 19 more Canons. The 37th Canon enacts that if a *layman* held any communication with heretics, *even unknowingly*, he should for 90 days take his place in church separated from other Christians and among the Catechumens; but if he had acted *knowingly*, and therefore through contempt, he should do penance for more than a year, and for two more years he should abstain from wine and meat (Moran, *Essays on the Early Irish Church*, p. 270).

[1] *Monks of the West*, book vii. Miss Stokes gives the names of 63 of the first teachers who during the seventh century spread the Columban rule from Luxeuil. Except the name of St. Gall, they are for the most part unfamiliar; but they are Latinized, and in consequence the Irish forms of the names are not discernible (*Three Months in the Forests of France*, pp. 254-5, Appendix vi.).

[2] Alzog's *Church History*, vol. ii. p. 74.

[3] *Monks of the West*, book vii.

[4] His monastery was at Lagny, six miles to the north of Paris. Miss Stokes has sought with great patience the existing monuments associated with his life and works. She personally visited the island of Innisquin in Lough Corrib, where he was born, sketched the ruins of the church of Killursa near Headford in the county of Galway, which he founded,

faith at Wurzburg (689); a little earlier (656) St. Livinius suffered martyrdom among the people of Brabant; whilst the apostle of the Frisians was Wilibrod, an Anglo-Saxon, but educated in Ireland. It was an Irishman, St. Virgilius,[1] who finished the work begun by St. Boniface—the conversion of the Bavarians—and who died Archbishop of Salzburg; and away by the waters of the Gulf of Taranto was an Irishman educated under Carthage of Lismore—Cathaldus, Bishop of Tarentum. Thus may be traced the footprints of Irish missionaries throughout Europe: at Taranto in the south, at Bobbio in the north of Italy, among the Alemanni of Switzerland, in the monasteries of the Franks, among the Morini by the North Sea, in Bavaria and Carinthia,—everywhere they are found, facing every danger, enduring every hardship, caring for nothing but to extend the empire of the Cross.

Ledwich and others have dwelt on the diversity of liturgy in the early Irish Church, have magnified the disputes about the tonsure and Easter, as if they were doctrinal errors, and have pointed out that such a church was not, and could not be in union with the Church of Rome. But diversity of liturgy is not the same as diversity of doctrine; whether the coronal tonsure or that of Simon Magus[2] was worn by Irish monks was not, after all, of vital importance; and the dispute about Easter, however regrettable it might be, was only a matter of discipline in the Church and in no way interfered with the

traced his steps into Suffolk in England where he preached, and in France travelled from Lagny to Mezerolles, near the latter of which towns the "Chapelle de St. Fursey" stands (*Three Months in the Forests of France*, pp. 134-77). The account of his visions, which she gives in detail, is given in smaller compass by Bede, who declares that "a brother of our monastery is still living, who is wont to declare that a very sincere and religious man told him that he had seen Fursey himself in the province of East Anglia and heard these visions from his mouth" (*Eccles. History*, book iii. chap. 19).

[1] Healy, p. 573.

[2] In the Irish tonsure the hair was cut off in front from ear to ear, the hair on the crown being untouched. It was called St. John's tonsure, and by the Anglo-Saxons that of Simon Magus. But why it got this name is not clear (*Catholic Dictionary*).

purity and integrity of its beliefs. In the nature and number of its sacraments, in its acceptance of revelation and its faith in revealed truths, in its conception of the Incarnation, of the Real Presence, and of Transubstantiation, in devotion to the Mother of Christ, as the Mother of God,[1] in obedience to the Bishop of Rome as Supreme Pastor and Teacher of the Universal Church,[2] it was as orthodox as any church could be. Nor was the boast of St. Columbanus an empty one when, in his letter to Pope Boniface, he asserted that no heresy and no schism had ever crept into the Irish Church. This bold statement has been as boldly challenged, and it is pointed out that Celestius, who in the fifth century was the principal supporter of Pelagius in his errors, was an Irishman. The heretic's creed is usually indefinite, and that of Celestius was no exception to the rule. He equivocated, he shifted his ground, he lied to the reigning Pope, and through the clouds of equivocation and mendacity the precise doctrines he taught are not easily seen. But some points at least are clear. The Catholic Church has always held with emphasis that in Adam all men have sinned, that as a result of his sin every man is born with inherited culpability, which renders him unfit for association with God, that the vision of the human intellect has been darkened and blurred, that the will has become enfeebled for good and the whole nature tainted and corrupted, that the forces of sensuality have become potent for evil, and that it is only by the grace of God, liberally given, rightly used, operating interiorly and mysteriously, that the human soul can secure its eternal destiny. In opposition to this, Celestius held[3] that Adam's sin affected only himself, that all men are born like himself

[1] Moran's *Essays*, pp. 224 *et seq.*, especially the Litany taken from the *Leabhar Breac*.

[2] The Letter of St. Columbanus ought to suffice on this point, where he styles the reigning Pope "Head of all the churches of Europe; Pastor of pastors; mystic pilot of the ship spiritual, that is the Church" (Moran, p. 97). In the same letter he warned him to preserve the *Apostolic faith*, which would certainly seem to imply that he had, as Pope, a commission to do so (p. 99).

[3] Alzog, vol. i. pp. 401-3; Healy, p. 40.

without sin, and that by their merely natural gifts, unaided by interior grace, they can acquire sanctity and salvation. These errors have been called Pelagianism, because it was Pelagius, a British monk, who was first identified with them. Perhaps Celestius was also British: it is at least doubtful if he was Irish; and he who seeks only after historic truth and is not concerned to defend or defame the Irish Church, will think it improbable that a church which could scarcely be said to have an existence before St. Patrick's time, was already the training-ground of a formidable heresiarch, and he will note that neither in St. Patrick's time nor subsequently has it been proved that Pelagianism established itself in Ireland. Nor did the Arian heresy or any of its numerous offshoots ever strike root in Irish soil; and the angry controversies on the natures and wills of Christ, which furnished such abundant materials for subtle disputants, and which so long disturbed the peace of the whole Church, gave no occupation to Irish scholars. Traversing the well-worn paths of orthodoxy, they carefully shunned the seductive byways of error, viewed these polemical contests from afar with languid interest, and leaving to heretical ingenuity the work of doctrinal innovation, they were content with the humbler and more useful rôle of being saints and scholars in their own land, or being missionaries and martyrs abroad.

If the Church of Columbanus and Carthage be compared with the modern Irish Church, which claims to be its successor, they will be found to be in complete accord. The Baptism of the former Church, like that of the latter, was with water, was considered essential to salvation, and could be received but once.[1] Confirmation, as a Sacrament, is referred to by St. Patrick in his *Epistle to Caroticus*, and by St. Cummian in his *Penitential*.[2] The ancient Irish held that the Eucharist was a great Sacrifice in which the body and blood of Christ were offered up in the Mass in atonement for the sins of men, and a Sacrament[3] in which the same body and blood were

[1] Salmon, *The Ancient Irish Church*, pp. 59-66; extracts from the *Penitentials* of St. Finnian and St. Cummian.

[2] *Ibid.* p. 70. [3] Moran's *Essays*, pp. 241-2, also p. 166.

found as long as the consecrated particles remained. Their Sacrament of Penance differed from the modern in no respect, except that the penances imposed were more severe.[1] The accounts given of the last illness of St. Eugene of Ardstraw[2] and of St. Coleman show that the Sacrament of Extreme Unction was conferred; and between their Sacraments of Holy Orders[3] and Matrimony[4] and those of a later date no difference can be discerned. They believed in Purgatory[5] and in the efficacy of the Invocation of Saints; devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary was a marked feature of the Early Irish Church; and its acceptance of the Pope's Supremacy was unquestioned and unequivocal.

The only serious dispute with Rome was as to the manner of computing Easter.[6] The Paschal computation of the Irish was that introduced by St. Patrick, which then and long after was the same as that of Rome. In making this computation they had the Jewish Cycle of 84 years, never celebrated the Pasch before the Vernal Equinox, and, unlike the Jews and some of the churches of the East, never except on Sunday. It is therefore with great injustice that they have sometimes been branded with the opprobrious name of Quartodecimans.[7] But the Jewish Cycle was incorrect, and at Alexandria, where astronomy was studied and understood, its errors were detected and exposed and a more correct cycle of 19 years substituted. The Romans adopted the Alexandrian Cycle but seem not to have understood the Alexandrian method of computation; errors arose, nor was it until 525 that uniformity was established between Alexandria and Rome. These changes were not known

[1] Reeves' *On the Culdees*, R.I. Academy Translations, vol. xxiv. part ii. pp. 208-9. For abusing a servant the punishment was a hundred blows on the hand (Moran, pp. 250 *et seq.*).

[2] Salmon, p. 110. [3] *Ibid.* p. 114. [4] *Ibid.* p. 142.

[5] *Ibid.* p. 148. Usher (vol. iv. pp. 269-71) admits that prayers were said for the dead, but only for those *who were in bliss*; yet it might be asked, Why pray for those who had already attained happiness?

[6] Alzog, vol. ii. p. 65; Lanigan, vol. ii. p. 374.

[7] The Quartodecimans were those who celebrated Easter on the 14th day of the moon, whether it fell on Sunday or not.

in Ireland for some time, and when they were, they were regarded by the Irish with suspicion. Devotedly attached to the memory of their Saints, they regarded as an innovation whatever clashed with their Saints' practices and teaching, nor could they willingly believe that the Paschal system was wrong which was introduced by St. Patrick and sanctified by the approval of St. Columba. Solemnly admonished by Pope Honorius I. that they were wrong,[1] a synod was held at Old Leighlin (630) to discuss the question, but no agreement was arrived at. The canon passed at the instance of St. Patrick that all matters which could not be settled in Ireland be sent to Rome for decision was then remembered, and delegates were appointed to proceed to Rome. Those delegates on their return reported that they had seen Easter celebrated at Rome by men from all the churches of the world, and that all these churches agreed with Rome. A synod was then held at Moylena (Maghleana) (633), and the Irish system was abandoned for the Roman, and thus, as far as the south of Ireland was concerned, the question was settled. The monasteries of the north of Ireland, influenced and dominated by Iona, still held out, maintaining that what was good enough for St. Columba was good enough for them, and to these a very learned and holy man appealed—Cummian, Abbot and Bishop of Clonfert. He examined the various cycles of the Jews, Greeks, Latins, and Egyptians, ransacked ecclesiastical history and the decrees of Synods and Councils, drew arguments from Scripture and from the writings of St. Cyprian, St. Jerome, St. Augustine, and others, and finally, appealing to their common-sense, he asked them to contemplate the absurdity of their position—that alone in the whole world the Scots and Britons were right, while Rome and Jerusalem and Alexandria and Antioch were in error.[2] But learning and argument and entreaty were

[1] Healy, p. 235.

[2] Usher's *Sylloge*, No. xi. vol. iv. p. 432. The date of Cummian's Epistle is given as 634, and for a monk of that age the amount of learning shown is indeed remarkable ; nor is the writer's learning and ability more remarkable than his humility.

vain. These stubborn monks would not abandon the system of St. Columba, nor was it until the closing years of the seventh century, and then only at the earnest entreaty of Adamnan, that they abandoned their erroneous system and adopted the more correct computation of Rome.

Among the Anglo-Saxons the same disputes and differences existed as among the Irish. The Roman monks followed the Roman Easter, the Irish that of their own country; and as these two classes of monks lived and laboured side by side among the Anglo-Saxons, the people witnessed the scandal of one class of monks celebrating Easter weeks ahead of others. Among the people, each system had its adherents; even in the palace of the Northumbrian king uniformity did not exist, and while the king was celebrating the Paschal festivity, the queen was still practising the rigours of the Lenten fast. To establish uniformity a synod was held at Whitby (660), where the whole matter was debated and discussed. The Roman system was defended with great ability by Wilfrid, afterwards Archbishop of York; the Irish system by Colman, Abbot of Lindisfarne, with perhaps less ability but with no less zeal. King Oswy, who was present and favourable to Colman, was converted by the arguments of Wilfrid, and the synod, following his example, adopted the Roman system.[1] With an obstinacy little worthy of a saint and little in keeping with his own high character, Colman refused to submit, and taking with him the bones of his predecessor, Aidan, and accompanied by a number of monks—Irish and Saxon—as stubborn as himself, he left Lindisfarne and went back to Ireland. He established a monastery on an island off the west coast—the island of Innisboffin—an island bleak and barren and wave-worn as Lindisfarne itself, and there he spent the closing years

[1] Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*, book iii. chap. 25. Colman had St. Columba on his side, but Wilfrid was able to show that St. Peter was on his own side, and this it was that determined the king to change, for St. Peter was the doorkeeper of heaven and he was unwilling to contradict him, lest when he (Oswy) came to the gates of heaven there should be no one to admit him, St. Peter being his adversary.

of his life, practising the greatest austerities and listening to the wild wailing of the sea. In 716 Iona itself abandoned its ancient errors to which it had so tenaciously clung.

Lanigan complains that the accounts left of events in the eighth century are meagre and incomplete, perhaps owing to neglect, perhaps—which is more likely—to the loss of documents, but we have sufficient materials to show that the Church of that period was not unworthy of its past. The monasteries of Armagh, Clonmacnoise, Lismore, Bangor, Clonard, and others continued to flourish and acquire fame, and from their cloisters a succession of saintly and learned men went forth who spread afar the fame of the schools in which they were trained. The missionary spirit of Irishmen was as active as ever, and among them was Alto, who founded a monastery near Munich (750), called after its founder Altmunster;[1] Rumold, an Irish bishop, martyred near Mechlin[2] (775); Virgilius of Salzburg,[3] among the first, if not the first, to proclaim the opinion of the sphericity of the earth and the existence of the antipodes; and Cummian, who died at Bobbio (735), so venerated by the Lombard king Luitprand, that he adorned the Irish monk's tomb with precious stones.[4] And what has been written of two other Irishmen by a monk of St. Gall is remarkable: "When the illustrious Charlemagne began to reign alone in the western part of the world (772), and literature was everywhere almost forgotten, it happened that two Scots of Ireland came over to the shores of France, men incomparably skilled in human learning and in the holy Scriptures."[5] These were Clemens and Albinus; the former, Charlemagne kept to teach in France, the latter he placed at the head of the School of Pavia.

[1] Lanigan, vol. iii. p. 189.
[2] *Ibid.* p. 199.
[3] Usher's *Sylloge*, No. 17.
[4] Lanigan, vol. iii. p. 171.
[5] *Ibid.* vol. iii. p. 208.

CHAPTER VII

The First Christian Kings

FROM the fifth to the ninth century there were many wars in the countries of Continental Europe. Goths, Huns, Vandals, Ostrogoths and Lombards each in turn had swept like a desolating flood over the provinces of the Roman Empire, leaving death and desolation in its track.[1] Before the sixth century dawned, the Empire of the West fell, and while the century was yet young, the Ostrogoths ruled in Italy, the Visigoths in Spain, the Franks in Gaul, the provinces of Britain being shared by the Angles, Saxons and Jutes. Like vultures over their prey, these barbarians often quarrelled with each other, and wars and conquests and changes of government were the result. Before the sixth century closed, a new people, the Lombards, ruled in Italy ; two centuries later they were conquered by the Franks, their kingdom ceased to exist, and three centuries after the fall of the Western Empire a Roman emperor again arose in the person of Charlemagne. During all this time, if we except an unimportant inroad of the Saxons, Ireland was free from the ravages of foreign invasion. Never subject to Rome, perhaps it was never heard of by those who invaded the Roman Empire, nor is there any reason to think that if these barbarian hosts had heard of Ireland, they would have wasted their energies in conquering a remote island, while they had before them the fertile fields of Italy and Gaul. Untroubled by either Frank or Saxon, Ireland was allowed to pursue its destiny in peace, and yet it is only the truth to say that from the sixth to the ninth century its record was one of

[1] Gibbon, vol. ii. pp. 348, 456, 480, 498 ; vol. iii. p. 258.

turbulence and blood. A crowd of chieftains or petty kings, careless of the national welfare, and intent only on preserving the lawless independence of their clans, were for ever contending with each other. A dispute about boundaries, an injury to a clansman, a slight, or apparent slight, to the chief, perhaps his predatory or plundering instincts to possess what belonged to a weaker neighbour—from such causes war often arose; and when such causes were wanting, vanity or ambition supplied others. In the Brehon law it is stated that he is no king who has not hostages,[1] and these were usually had by war. The more of these hostages a king or chief had, the greater was he acknowledged to be; he regarded their number with as much complacency as the Red Indian regarded the number of scalps that hung at his belt, and Niall is best remembered, not so much for his foreign conquests, as because of the nine hostages he retained in his power. As if these various causes of contention were not sufficiently numerous, there were besides the endless struggles for the position of Ardri. Since the death of Niall, the honour was restricted to his descendants, but his descendants were numerous and ambitious, the principle of primogeniture was not recognized, there were many candidates for the kingly office, and whilst few of these princes were willing to be subjects, fewer still were worthy to be kings. Nor was the Ardri, when chosen, ever free from trouble, and of him it might be said with truth that uneasy was the head which wore the crown. His friends and admirers insisted that he should exact the Boru tribute, and if he showed any reluctance to do so, they taunted him with his impotence;[2] the Leinstermen seldom paid without war; those princes who aspired to be Ardris themselves, but whose ambitious hopes were not realized, regarded him with envy, thwarted all his plans, conspired against his life, perhaps had him treacherously assassinated,

[1] *Senchus Mor*, vol. iv. p. 51.

[2] If the Book of Leinster is entitled to credit, Adamnan was highly displeased with King Finnachta when he renounced the Boru tribute; but the story is probably the invention of some bard, for a man so saintly and so wise as Adamnan would hardly be guilty of such unpatriotic conduct (Douglas Hyde, *A Literary History of Ireland*, pp. 236-7).

and there were few of these Ardris whose end was not one of violence. Of the twelve kings who ruled in the sixth century all but two were either murdered or fell in battle, and their successors in the two following centuries were pursued with similar misfortune.

If everything which the bards wrote of these centuries had come down to us, our annals would contain much more than they do, for they would be filled with exaggeration and fable. But much of what they wrote having perished, we are compelled to confine ourselves to facts, and of many of these Ardris all we know is that they reigned, that they fought battles, and that they died. The great events that mark their reigns are few, yet there are a few of some importance which cannot and ought not be ignored. In the reign of Lughaidh (503), from that small territory called Dalriada, lying eastward of the river Bann, a colony passed over the sea to Caledonia. They were led by Fergus, Ængus, and Loarn, the sons of Erc, and were strong enough to effect the conquest of that part of Caledonia from the mouth of the Clyde, north-west along the broken and irregular coast of Argyle.[1] The land was not rich, nor was their territory extensive, but, perhaps by fresh reinforcements from Ireland, they were able to establish and consolidate their power until ultimately, at a later age, they extended the limits of their possessions, defeated the Picts, and became masters of all Caledonia. The same year that these colonists left Dalriada for Caledonia, the Ardri Lughaidh died. His two immediate successors were Muircheartach (died 527) and Tuathal (527-544), about neither of whom is anything remarkable known.

The succeeding Ardri was Diarmuid, and his reign is marked by events of considerable importance. His birth, and perhaps also his abilities, had marked him out as Tuathal's successor, but that Ardri had other projects in view, and to prevent Diarmuid coming to the throne he proclaimed him an outlaw and set a price on his head. Diarmuid lived for many

[1] Reeves' *Adamnan*, pp. 433-8 (Additional Notes). Reeves gives the date of this migration as 506.

years the life of a fugitive and an outcast, and at length took refuge with St. Ciaran, who was then founding his monastery at Clonmacnoise. He aided the Saint in putting up his first building, and whilst driving a post into the earth, took Ciaran's hand and placed it over his own in token of reverence and submission.[1] This fact is commemorated, and on one of the crosses still standing at Clonmacnoise there is a representation of Ciaran with his hand resting on that of Diarmuid.[2] When he became Ardri, Diarmuid was not so submissive or respectful to the monks, but, on the contrary, had serious disputes with them—disputes which brought many ills both on himself and on his country. In 560 the Feis of Tara was held, and during the usual festivities a young Connaught prince, who was kept as a hostage at Tara, killed another hostage, whether by accident or design does not appear.[3] For such a heinous offence death was the punishment, and hoping to save his life, the young prince fled to Columba's monastery for sanctuary; but the right of sanctuary was denied, the Ardri was stern and determined to punish, and the young man was violently torn from the shelter of Columba's monastery and instantly put to death. Another refugee—Aedh Guaire of Hy-Many, who had killed the king's sergeant, Baclamh—fled to the monastery of Rhodanus of Lorrha.[4] But again the right of sanctuary was denied, Hugh was carried to Tara, and when Rhodanus followed and earnestly begged the prisoner's release, he was answered with insults by the king.[5] Such conduct on the part of the Ardri roused the indignation of the clergy; Rodanus and other monks went to Tara, cursed Diarmuid, and even cursed Tara itself, and it is certain that Diarmuid was the last monarch who dwelt there.[6] That ancient palace gradually fell into decay, its halls were

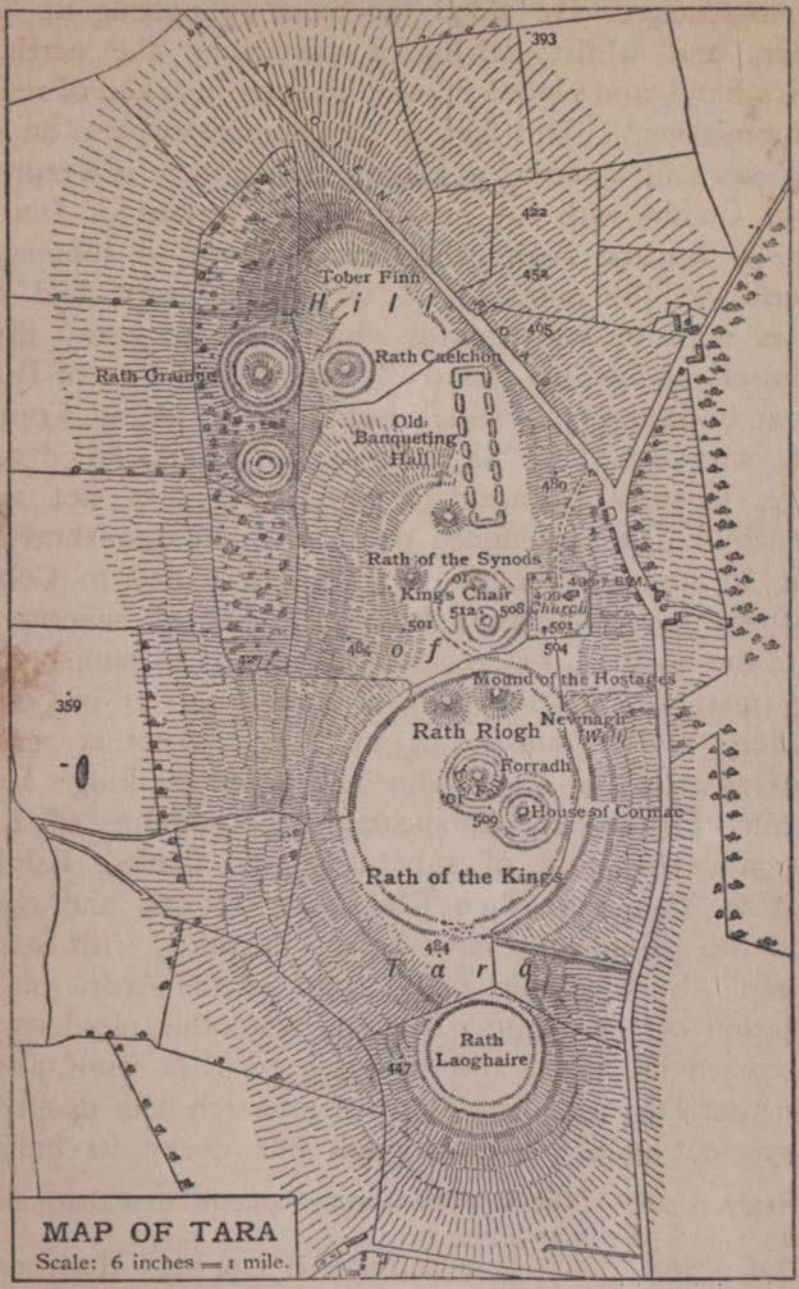
[1] Healy, p. 262. The Saint in return prophesied that Diarmuid would be Ardri.

[2] *Ibid.* p. 267. [3] *Four Masters*, vol. i. p. 191; Healy, p. 310.

[4] *Annals of Clonmacnoise*, at the year 563.

[5] Petrie, *Antiquities of Tara Hill*, p. 126.

[6] *Annals of Clonmacnoise.* They cursed Tara, and prayed that no king or queen should ever after dwell there.


393
452a
452
Tober Finn
H i l l
Rath Grainne
Rath Caelchon
Old Banqueting Hall
450
Rath of the Synods
King's Chair
512
508
501
Church
504
484
O f
Mound of the Hostages
359
Rath Riogh
Newmagh
Well
Forradh
House of Cormac
509
Rath of the Kings
T a r a
484
Rath Laoghaire
447
MAP OF TARA
Scale: 6 inches = 1 mile.

silent, its banquets and feasts ceased, and the lament of a modern poet is well known that the harp of Tara hung silent upon the palace walls, and that on the rare occasions on which its chords were touched it was only to sing of the ruin of Tara.[1] In their dispute with the Ardri, Rhodanus and Columba may have been right—the privilege of sanctuary was an important one and ought not lightly to be resigned—and if they had chastised Diarmuid himself with the spiritual weapons at their command, posterity would not have much reason to complain. But in covering Tara with their maledictions, they did what was unwise and unpatriotic, for it was the residence of the Ardri for ages, it was the centre and symbol of united government, no other place was so respected by the people. After Diarmuid, each Ardri dwelt in his own ancestral territory, at Aileach in the north and at Dún-na-sciath, near Mullingar; Tara, darkened and blighted by the Saint's curses, was deserted, the Ardri's decrees emanating from Aileach and Dún-na-sciath received but scant courtesy; they were neither obeyed nor feared, and the Ardris themselves came to be spoken of as kings with opposition—kings with a doubtful title to the throne.

Other evils also came upon Diarmuid. Columba had been paying a visit to his friend St. Finian of Moville, and this latter monk had in his possession a valuable copy of the Psalter. Desiring a copy for his own use, Columba secretly, and without asking or obtaining Finian's permission, made a copy of the book. The secret was discovered; Finian was angry, and demanded the copy; Columba refused; the dispute was referred to the Ardri, who decided against Columba, on the ground that the copy went with the book, as the calf did with the cow.[2] Columba was of the royal race of Tirconnell, he was not yet a saint, but a proud, self-willed man with the warlike instincts of the princes from whom he sprang. He refused

[1] In Adamnan's day Tara was used as the place of a national assembly, as it was sometimes, besides, for ecclesiastical assemblies (Petrie's *Tara Hill*, p. 174).

[2] Healy, p. 250.

to abide by the decision of the Ardri, angrily made his way to the north, roused with his fierce complaints his relatives and friends, and Tirconnell, assisted by the King of Connaught, made war upon Diarmuid. The battle between the contending hosts was fought at Cuildreimhne[1] in the county of Sligo (561), and Diarmuid was utterly defeated. The copy of the Psalter, since known as the Cathach, or battle book, was captured and ever afterwards kept in the family of the O'Donnells. The stormy and troubled life of Diarmuid was closed (565) by a violent death. In that year[2] he was killed by Black Aedh, one of the princes of Dalaraidhe. His successors were Domhnall and Fergus, who reigned as joint sovereigns, but their reign lasted only one year. They were succeeded by Eochaidh and Baedan, also as joint sovereigns; both of these kings were killed in 568, Ainmire, the next Ardri, was killed a year later, and his successor a year later still.

The next Ardri was Aedh, son of Ainmire, and his reign, beginning about 570, is noted for its length, nearly thirty years, and also for the fact that during that time was held (590) the Convention of Druim Ceat.[3] The place at which this assembly met is situated in the county of Londonderry, not far from the town of Newtownlimivady, on the banks of the little river Roe. A long mound, sometimes called the Mullagh and sometimes Daisy Hill, still marks the spot. Called by the Ardri himself, the assembly was the most representative and the most numerously attended that had met in Ireland since the Assemblies at Tara ceased to be held. Accommodated in tents, which covered the summit and sides of the hill, there were gathered together from all quarters of Ireland kings, princes, bards, bishops, abbots, and various members of the clergy; while from the Dalriadan colony of Caledonia came King Aidan, accompanied by a still more celebrated man, Columba, now Abbot of

[1] Columba prayed for his own friends while the battle raged (*Adamnan*, p. 250).

[2] This is the date given by Tighernach (*Four Masters*, vol. i. p. 200, note).

[3] This O'Donovan believes to be the true date, though the *Annals of Clonmacnoise* give the date 587, and the *Annals of Ulster* 576.

Iona. The sittings of the Convention were protracted but were not without fruit. The Ardri, it appears, had received tribute from the princes of Dalriada in Ireland, and also from the Caledonian colony of the Dalriadans. But Aidan, king of the latter, refused to continue paying such tribute, alleging that he was an independent king and not a mere tributary chief.[1] The Ardri rejected these pretensions and menaced Aidan, whom he regarded as a rebellious vassal. To Columba especially belongs the merit of having settled this dispute. Aidan had in many ways befriended him and his monastery at Iona; he was his kinsman and neighbour; Columba had anointed him as king.[2] The abbot knew the difficulties with which he was surrounded in his Caledonian possessions; that he was encompassed by powerful enemies—the Northern and Southern Picts—and that against these enemies he could never make headway if kept in a position of dependence and tutelage, hampered by a yearly tribute to the Irish king. It would be a repetition of the Boru tribute with all its attendant evils. His arguments were convincing, his influence with the Convention was great, and his views prevailed. Aidan was declared independent, and he and his people on their side undertook to be always the allies and friends, as they were already the relatives, of the Irish monarch.

The position and privileges of the bards were also considered, and afforded much matter for discussion. Nor was it except through the great influence of Columba that this question also was satisfactorily settled. In each kingdom, and even in each clan, there was at least one of these bards, granted an official allowance and occupying an official position. Dressed in his white robe, and not unfrequently accompanied by a retinue of musicians, he followed his chief into every battle in which he was engaged. The varying fortunes of the fight gave inspiration to his muse, and as the ranks of battle advanced or

[1] Reeves' *Adamnan*, p. 92, note.

[2] *Ibid.* pp. 198-9. One of the first instances on record where a king was anointed, and all the more remarkable, because the anointing ecclesiastic was not a bishop but only an abbot.

retreated he poured forth his unpremeditated song. He urged the timid, steadied the hesitating, applauded valour, put cowardice to shame; and the coward had less fear of the foemen's weapons than of the biting satire of his bard. In peace he sat as an honoured guest in the kingly banquet-hall, where he extolled the merits of his chief, his prowess in war, his fleetness in the chase, his wisdom in council; female beauty and female virtue received their meed of praise at his hands; and when he spoke of battles, it was to chronicle in song the heroic deeds of his kinsmen, and to pay a tribute to the memory of the fallen brave.[1] His recompense was given with no niggard hand. The Chief Bards ranked as high as princes, and in all public assemblies their place was next to that of the king. Large landed estates were given them, and many of them had an income which might well support the dignity of a prince. Several colleges were established where these bards were trained, where history and poetry were taught; these colleges were filled with students, and before the close of the sixth century the bards had become so numerous and wealthy that one-third of the land of Ireland was in their hands. But as toleration begets security, privilege begets insolence, and these bards, loaded with honours and with wealth, were still unsatisfied. Numbers of them, having no official position, wandered over the country and wasted their lives in idleness and dissipation. At the richer and better class of homes they demanded hospitality as a right, and according to the character of the reception they got, so was their praise or blame. Whoever received them well they covered with fulsome adulation, glossed over vices where they existed, and found virtue and merit where there were none. But whoever received them coldly, or refused to receive them at all, they held up to public scorn and contempt. Such an order of men, idle, useless and lazy, had become a public nuisance and a national danger; there were few they had not offended or disgusted; and the cry in Ireland was universal that the Bardic Order should be abolished.[2] Columba

[1] Walker, *Historical Memoirs of the Irish Bards*, pp. 10-17.
[2] Douglas Hyde, *Literary History of Ireland*, pp. 488-90.

saved them from extinction.[1] He admitted there were grave abuses, but he pleaded for reform rather than for extinction. The bards were historians as well as poets, and he asked: If there were no bards, who would write the history of the country, who would trace the pedigrees of its princes, who would sing the praises of its heroes? Columba himself was a poet,[2] a fact which quickened his sympathy with the threatened order. The Convention hearkened to his appeal, the bards were saved, but their number was diminished. Henceforth only one bard was allowed to each provincial prince and each lord of a cantred, and this bard was bound to use his talents only for the glory of God and the honour of his native land. In the bardic seminaries the number of students was strictly limited; of all these seminaries the Chief Bard of the Ardri was president, and it was he who nominated the bards for the service of the various princes and lords.[3]

But while these matters were satisfactorily arranged, that fruitful source of discord and strife, the Boru tribute, was left untouched. The tax was still insisted upon by the Ardri; the Leinstermen resisted, under their able chief, Branduff, and a battle was fought at Dunbolg[4] (598). The advantage of numbers was on the side of the Ardri, but the advantage of ability and skill was with the Leinster king; the Ardri's army was routed and himself was among the slain. The last king of the century, as well as the first, thus met a violent death. Nor was the fate of the kings who reigned in the first years

[1] Though Columba saved the bards and in gratitude received their praises, yet the relations between the bards and the clergy were not of a cordial character (Reeves' *Adamnan*, p. 80).

[2] Reeves' *Adamnan*, pp. 264 *et seq.* It is in his "Dialogue with Cormac," p. 267, he declares that

> Death is better in reproachless Erin
> Than perpetual life in Alba.

[3] Keating, pp. 379-80. At Druim Ceat the bards were exempted from taxes and their houses were invested with the privilege of sanctuary. *Vide* also Walker's *Bards*, pp. 53-54.

[4] Dunbolg is situated near Hollywood in the county of Wicklow (*Four Masters*, vol. i. pp. 218-19).

of the seventh century anything different. The names of these kings and the order in which they reigned is known—Aedh Allán and Colman, as joint sovereigns, Aedh Uairidhnach, Maelcobha, and Suibhne. Their reigns fill up the space from the battle of Dunbolg to the accession of Domhnall (627);[1] and of each it can be said that his reign was uneventful, his life unmarked by any great incident, his death—except that of Aedh Uairidhnach—brought about by violence.

The personal talents of Domhnall, and at least one notable event in his reign, have distinguished the period in which he lived, and mark that period out from the time which immediately preceded and followed it. The son of Aedh, the son of Ainmire, both of whom were Ardris, Domhnall was but a child when the Convention of Druim Ceat was held, and was brought there by his nurses, so that he might receive St. Columba's blessing. The Saint blessed him and predicted that he would survive all his brothers, that he would be a famous king, that he would be victorious against all his enemies, and that he would die in his own house and in his own bed peaceably, and surrounded by his friends.[2] And the prophecy in its entirety was fulfilled. He became Ardri in 627, and was soon involved in war with an Ulster prince named Congal. This prince had made war—apparently an unjust war—on the preceding Ardri, Suibhne, and in a battle fought between them Suibhne was slain. Such conduct Domhnall was determined to punish; he regarded Congal as an unjust aggressor, who had acted as a rebellious subject. He made war upon him, defeated him at the battle of Dun-Ceithern in Derry (628), and drove him from his possessions in Ulster.[3] The exiled prince sought refuge among the Saxons, and did not abandon the hope of regaining his lost dominions, as well as being revenged upon the Ardri. After spending nine years in exile,

[1] *Four Masters*, 598, Aedh Slan and Colman; 604, Aedh Uairidhnach; 612, Maelcobha; 615, Suibhne.

[2] Reeves' *Adamnan*, p. 37. Domhnall's eldest brother, Conall, died in 604; his second brother, Cumasach, was slain at Dunbolg; Maelcobha, the third brother, was slain (615) at the battle of Sliabh Truim, in Co. Tyrone.

[3] *Four Masters*.

he returned to Ulster, bringing with him a mercenary army gathered together from many quarters—Saxons, Scots, Britons, and Picts; and these, joined to his own followers at home, made up a numerous army.[1] But the Ardri was not dismayed. He was an active and able prince, and rapidly gathered an army together, and assisted by the forces of Munster, Leinster and Connaught, he marched northwards.[2] He did not wish to fight Congal, for he loved him; he was his foster-father, and he sorrowfully declared that his fight with him was that of a son and a father.[3] But rebellion should be put down, and it was necessary that Congal and his mercenaries should be crushed. The opposing forces met at Moyrath (637), a place now marked by the little town of Moira, in Down. Not since the battle of Dunbolg was there so fiercely contested a fight, in which the most stubborn valour was displayed, and in which success was long doubtful. The single combat between Congal on one side and a chieftain named Conall on the other side is compared in a bardic tale of the twelfth century to that between Hercules and Antaeus.[4] The soldiers gathered round their chiefs and were animated by their example, and for six days the battle raged. The victory, though long delayed, was decisive. Congal was slain; of his Ulster troops only 600 were left, and his allies from across the sea were almost exterminated.[5] For the remainder of his life, Domhnall's reign was peaceable, disturbed neither by native nor foreigner; and he died (644), as St. Columba had foretold, in his bed, and surrounded by his friends. And special stress has been laid on this fact,[6] so rare was it for an Irish king to die a peaceful death in those days of violence and strife.

[1] Reeves' *Adamnan*, pp. 200-201.

[2] *Battle of Moyrath* (edited by O'Donovan), Irish Archaeological Society, p. 215.

[3] *Ibid.* p. 135.

[4] *Ibid.* p. 259.

[5] If the bardic tale (*Battle of Moyrath*) could be taken as true, only one foreigner—Dubdhiadh—a Druid, survived, and he swam across to Scotland with a dead hero tied to his leg (p. 321), a fiction not worthy of a bard.

[6] Reeves' *Adamnan*, pp. 37-38.

For forty years after the death of Domhnall important events are few. There was the usual quarrelling among the candidates for the position of Ardri, but scarcely anything else, except that the country was visited by a plague[1] (660), the ravages of which were considerable. Almost in every house there was death, among those who were carried off being Diarmuid and Blathmac, who ruled jointly as Ardris. In the reign of Finnachta, Ireland was for the first time (684) invaded by a Saxon king. The Northumbrian king, Egfrid, apparently without any provocation, or any design except plunder, sent his general, Berta, and an army across to the east coast of Ireland. The invaders wasted and spoiled the whole country along the coast from Dublin to Drogheda, destroyed and robbed the churches and monasteries, and carried away many of the natives into captivity. Finnachta had not the energy of King Domhnall, or he might have driven out these intruders; but whatever qualities he had, military capacity was not one of them, the resistance he offered was feeble and futile, and Berta and his Northumbrians were able to plunder and destroy as they willed. Bede has condemned with just severity this invasion by the Northumbrian king, laments that he should without cause have attacked an inoffensive nation, who had always been friendly to the English, and regards his defeat and death the following year, at the hands of the Picts, as the just punishment for this crime.[2]

A century had passed—a century of war and strife—since the national assembly of Druim Ceat, until again another similar assembly was convened. This time (697) it was at Tara, and is remarkable as being the last Feis of Tara. As at Druim Ceat, the notabilities of the whole land were there[3]—kings, princes, bishops, and abbots—and so also was Columba's

[1] *Four Masters.*

[2] Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*, book iv. chap. 26. Bede says that the Irish "prayed long and fervently for vengeance."

[3] There were thirty-nine ecclesiastics, presided over by the Abbot of Armagh; at the head of the laity was Loingsech, the Ardri, who succeeded Finnachta in 695, and reigned until 703 (Reeves' *Adamnan*, Appendix to Preface).

successor, Adamnan, ninth Abbot of Iona. One law which the assembly made is remarkable: it was a law prohibiting women from taking part in battle. It was afterwards called Adamnan's law, because it was at his suggestion and through his influence it was passed. Such a law had been made at the Convention of Druim Ceat, but in Ireland abuses are tenacious of existence, the law continued to be disregarded, and a century later it was necessary that it should be re-enacted and re-enforced. On men only the stern duty of active warfare is imposed, and if women are found upon the battlefield, it is not as combatants to mingle in the fray. To sympathize, to comfort, to console, to ease the stricken limb, to lift up the drooping head, to staunch the bleeding wound, to moisten the parched lips, to cool the aching brow, to whisper into the ear words of consolation and hope, to recall the prayer learned at a mother's knee and lost amid the dissipation of camps, to point with trust to that unknown land on which the soul is about to enter, and on the threshold of which she trembles and fears, and finally, to reverently close the eye when the spirit has winged its flight, —it is such acts as these we expect of women, and such that give her dignity amid the roar and the crash of battle. There are times when she may go further. Her honour, her personal liberty may be imperilled, her faith endangered, her country on the point of being enslaved by an alien and hated power. In such circumstances women cannot be blamed if, rising superior to the natural weakness of their sex, they rush to arms and insist on fighting like men. It is easy and natural to sympathize with those women of Germany who, with dishevelled hair, implored of their own soldiers on the battlefield not to yield to the enemy, that is, not to permit their women to become slaves;[1] and it is natural also to admire those women of Limerick who, when their city was besieged, fought by the side of their men, and as valiantly as they, and helped to drive the soldiers of King William from out their city, baffled, beaten and dismayed. But it is different when we contemplate the woman who fights for the sake of fight, with the fury of battle

[1] Caesar, *De Bello Gallico*, lib. i. chap. 52.

in her eye; and in the pages of the Greek historian there is no class of woman inspires us with more aversion than those Amazons of Scythia "who shoot with the bow, throw the javelin and ride on horseback, and have never learned the employments of women."[1] Happily they belong more to mythology than to history. The Irishwomen of Adamnan's day were not Amazons, yet sometimes their conduct was not dissimilar, and a sight which the abbot saw in one of his journeys through Meath was as barbarous as could be seen among the most brutal of men. In a battle that was being fought, women were engaged as combatants on both sides, and Adamnan saw a woman of one side drag along a woman of the other side, with an iron hook sunk in the woman's breast.[2] To stop such revolting scenes, to recall woman to what became her sex, to restrict her to the sphere of womanhood, Adamnan's law was passed; and the man whose influence was strong enough to have it enacted and enforced deserved well both of his own age and of after times.

In the reign of Finnachta (674-690) that monarch did at least one act which redounded to his honour. At the instance of St. Moling, Bishop of Ferns, he renounced for ever, for himself, and as far as he could for his successors, the Boru tribute.[3] It would be difficult to imagine any arrangement more fruitful of strife than the infliction upon Leinster of this tribute. It was unjust and offensive to that province, and its exaction was usually resisted by force, that is, when Leinster was strong enough to resist. To abolish for ever this unhappy tribute, which had worked so many ills and was likely to work more, St. Moling intervened with the Ardri, and happily with success. And the promise which Finnachta made he faithfully kept. But his successors did not follow his example; they refused to be bound by his promises, and had neither his wisdom nor his patriotism. The hated tribute was revived, with the result that the reigning Ardri, Fergal, in trying to enforce it, was defeated

[1] Herodotus, book iv. chap. 114.
[2] Healy, p. 342. [3] *Ibid.* p. 428.

at Allen, in Kildare (722),[1] by the outraged and indignant Leinstermen, the Ardri himself being among the slain. As a sequel to that battle and its result, Leinster was again attacked (737)[2] by Fergal's son, who was then Ardri, and at Ballyshannon, in Kildare, the Leinstermen were defeated, their army almost exterminated, and Leinster left with scarce a man to defend her. Thus were these contests kept up, sometimes suspended but again renewed; and while Leinster and successive Ardris weakened and exhausted each other, a new enemy was about to appear on the scene, against whom, when divided, they could effect but little, but whom, if united, they might have overthrown.

[1] *Four Masters.* The Ardri had 21,000 men, Leinster only 9000. The list of the chiefs who fell is given in the *Annals of Clonmacnoise* at 717.

[2] *Ibid.* at the year 733. The Ardri was Aedh Allán. The place where the battle was fought is "four miles south-west of Kilcullen Bridge."

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CHAPTER VIII

The Danish Invasion

THE coasts of Scandinavia were inhabited in the eighth century by a warlike and savage race, who, under the varying names of Northmen and Danes, were long the terror of Western Europe. The Goths, who so often harassed the Roman provinces, and who in the third century were the allies, and in the fifth century the conquerors, of Rome, had their original home on the shores of the Baltic:[1] and from the same coasts the Angles and Saxons issued, in the fifth and sixth centuries,[2] first to assist and afterwards to conquer the Britons. The similarity of manners and beliefs between these different races indicates that they came from common ancestors and were all members of the great Teutonic race. But in the eighth century they differed much among themselves. The Goths of Italy and Spain, whose morals had been purified by their Christian beliefs and whose manners had become softened by contact with civilization, bore but little resemblance to the savages who fought under the banners of Alaric. Nor was the difference less marked between the Christian Anglo-Saxons, who could already boast of the scholarship of Alcuin and Bede, and their savage kinsmen, who in their incursions spared neither age nor sex, and whose progress through Britain could be marked by heaps of human bones.[3] But the Northmen of the eighth century were still savages, and neither Goth nor Saxon at their worst were more ferocious than they.

[1] Gibbon, vol. i. p. 188. Their homes were in the southern portion of Sweden.

[2] *Ibid.* vol. ii. p. 138.

[3] *Ibid.* vol. ii. p. 570.

War and piracy were their favourite occupations; they fought for the sake of fighting, deemed it a duty to revenge the slightest affront offered them,[1] considered it meritorious to attack and plunder every nation but their own; and such was their repugnance to a life of peace that, at home among themselves, they organized reviews and tournaments and sham battles, which sometimes ended in real and bloody warfare.[2] Whatever was weak or helpless they despised; and while wealth and birth were respected among them, they recognized, above all, the ascendancy of personal prowess and daring achievement. Their own country was poor, it abounded in forests and mountains, the climate was severe, the hardships of life were many, and as the population increased the prospects of those who remained at home grew less attractive. The cautious, the timid, the peace-loving might prefer a life of settled industry at home, but among the Northmen the spirit of adventure was strong, and the numbers were many who willingly, and even eagerly, abandoned the quietness and obscurity of their native fields for the life of the freebooter, for the hope of wealth and fame, and the exhilaration of battle. Such men knew no fear. Like the Saxons, they excelled in the use of the battle-axe and the oar. With the sea that raged round their coasts they were familiar; they knew its moods, they dreaded not its wrath, they loved to wander over its broad expanse, and found a fierce delight in wrestling with the tempests and the billows. At first their depredations were confined to the Baltic and its neighbourhood, but their courage advanced with their success, and France and Britain and Scotland and Ireland were successively assailed. As their boats were light and drew but little water, they could voyage from the sea far up the creeks and rivers, and from the shelter of the river-banks suddenly swoop down upon the inhabitants, and, collecting all that could be plundered, rapidly make their way back to the sea.[3] Those who resisted they killed, or, if they allowed any to survive, it was to take them

[1] Mallet's *Northern Antiquities* (Bohn's Ed.), p. 126.
[2] *Ibid.* p. 195.
[3] Gibbon, vol. ii. p. 139.

away into slavery, making them till the earth; for these Vikings disdained the labours of agriculture, as fit only for slaves and beneath the dignity of warriors and freemen. Among their deities, Odin,[1] who dwelt in Valhalla, was the chief; but Thor, the God of War, who slew all his enemies with his mighty hammer, received much of their veneration. These gods rewarded most of all bravery in war, and hence the Northman entered into battle with a light heart. If he survived, his valour was rewarded with wealth and glory and slaves to minister to his wants, the Skalds sung his praises,[2] and the youth were directed to follow in his footsteps; if he fell, he was taken at once by Odin into Valhalla, where only warriors were worthy to go, and where his time was spent in feasting and drinking with the gods.[3]

The Irish distinguished these Northmen into Finn-galls, or white strangers, and Dubh-galls, or black strangers: the former being the faired-haired inhabitants of Norway, whilst the complexion of the Dubh-galls, or natives of Denmark, was of a darker tinge. But the names Northmen and Danes are indefinitely applied. Those who went from Denmark were impelled by the same motives and had the same objects in view as those who went from Norway. They were animated by the same hopes and fears and their beliefs were similar. Nor were the Irish able at all times clearly to distinguish between the Norsemen and the Danes, for though they sometimes fought among themselves, they were not infrequently enrolled under the same Viking's banners.

It was towards the close of the eighth century that Ireland was first ravaged by these Northern pirates. They had landed

[1] Mallet, pp. 79-83. Among the Scandinavians there were two who bore the name of Odin, and they are sometimes confounded one with the other—Odin, the supreme deity, whose position in Scandinavian mythology is akin to Jupiter on Olympus; and Odin, a warrior and lawgiver, who fought against Pompey, and who in time seems to have been treated with divine honours.

[2] *Ibid.* p. 235.

[3] *Ibid.* p. 105. The Scandinavian conception of supreme bliss, either here or in a future state, was to fight and to eat and drink to excess.

at Wessex (787), coming in only three ships,[1] and were taken by the king's officers at Dorchester for merchants. They had ravaged Lindisfarne and Northumbria (793), plundered Lambay Island near Dublin (795),[2] and Innispatrick near Skerries (798), taking away the shrine of St. Dochona. In 806 they attacked Iona, overcame the monks, who could offer but a feeble resistance, burned the monastic buildings, carried away the gold and silver vessels of the church, and in addition to the smoking ruins of the venerable monastery, they left the slaughtered remains of sixty-eight monks to attest the fury of their assault.[3] In the following year they again visited the Irish coasts, ravaged Innishmury off the coast of Sligo, and for the first time penetrated some distance inland, and laid much of Roscommon desolate. The islands off the coast of Kerry were plundered (811), and in the following year the district of Burrishoole in Mayo was ravaged and numbers of its people slain.[4] The whole line of coast from Wexford to Cork and Kerry was swept with desolation (822), Bergery Island in Wexford Harbour, Cape Clear Island, Cork and Cloyne being among the places that suffered most. On the desolate island of Skellig, off the coast of Kerry, neither gold nor silver could be found to gratify their rapacity and greed. An anchoret was the only inhabitant of the island; he fasted and prayed and kept lonely vigil on that desolate rock, while the waves thundered at its base. The Northern pirates landed, captured the anchoret, and allowed him to die of starvation on their hands.[5] The trembling natives along the coast saw with dismay their lands laid desolate, their homes in ruin, their cattle and sheep carried off, their churches burned, their sacred vessels profaned by impious hands, their monks and priests massacred, their sons led away into slavery, their daughters to

[1] Ethhelwerd's *Chronicle.*

[2] *Four Masters.*

[3] *Ibid.* vol. i. p. 411; only sixty-four of the monks survived this attack (Lanigan, vol. iii. p. 241).

[4] *Four Masters.*

[5] *Wars of the Gael and Gall,* Introduction, p. 38.

slavery and dishonour. It was little wonder if they thought that the end of all things was at hand. Bangor was sacked (824), nine hundred of its monks murdered, and St. Comgall's shrine carried away. Dundalk and Moville and the whole district of Ossory were laid waste the same year, Lusk monastery was ravaged and destroyed (826),[1] Donaghmoyne, in Monaghan (829),[2] and neither the sanctity nor learning of St. Adamnan saved his remains from outrage, for his shrine also was carried away. Armagh, Louth and most of Ulster were plundered (830), Armagh being plundered three times in the course of one month. A permanent colony was established at Limerick, and from this central stronghold the surrounding territories of Munster were assailed, whilst the plunder of Lismore in the south and Maghera in the north, in the same year, attests the impartiality and extent of their depredations. Hampered by the divisions among their chiefs, destitute of defensive organization, ignorant of the time and place of attack, and generally taken unaware, the Irish could offer but an ineffective resistance. Yet the foreigners were sometimes checked and even defeated. The Munstermen defeated them (811) off the coast of Kerry; at Hy-Kinsella they were again defeated (827), and a combination of Munster chiefs all but destroyed the Danes of Limerick at Shanagolden.[3]

For more than thirty years these Northmen had harassed the Irish coasts. Their attacks were many, but so far had been irregular and intermittent, made by different leaders, without unity of purpose or design, and as yet, though there was much plunder, there was, except at Limerick, no attempt made at permanent settlement. But in 832 Turgesius,[4] the most renowned of their Vikings, appeared. Some obscurity surrounds his origin and exploits, and it has been sought to identify him with Regnar Lodbrog, who fought and fell in Northumbria. There are undoubtedly points of resemblance, if not of identification. They lived during the same years, they were famous

[1] *Four Masters*; Lanigan, vol. iii. pp. 270-71.
[2] *Annals of Clonmacnoise.* [3] *Four Masters.*
[4] *Wars of the Gael and Gall*, chap. 9, and Introduction, p. 43.

and successful Vikings, each was put to death by his Christian foes; Turgesius had a lord deputy named Gormundus or Gormo, and Scandinavian history records that the dominions acquired by the sword of Regnar were for a time ruled by a chieftain of that name. The name Turgesius is nothing more than Thorgils latinised, which means servant of Thor, the War God of the North, a name which might fittingly be applied to Regnar.[1] If the identity of these two chiefs be established, then we must accept the legend that Regnar died in Ireland, and discard that which declares that he was defeated and taken prisoner by King Ella of Northumberland, and that he was flung into a dungeon filled with vipers and venomous serpents, who stung him to death. And in his death-song he joyfully accepted his fate and smiled with pleasure when he reflected that a place was reserved for him in the halls of Odin, and that soon seated there at the great banquet-table he should drink flowing draughts of beer from cups of horn.[2] Whatever may be thought of Regnar Lodbrog, there is no doubt that Turgesius is a historical personage; there is no doubt as to his arrival in Ireland; and the time of his coming and the time of his death are matters of certainty. Equally ferocious as the other Norse leaders who preceded him, he entertained greater designs, and had greater capacity for command. Tired perhaps of the cheerless climate and barren soil of Norway, he desired a land with a more genial climate and more fertile fields. Like the other Vikings, he was ever ready for plunder; but plunder was not his only ambition, and apparently he meditated the permanent conquest of Ireland. Nor were the times unpropitious for his designs. The northern half of Ireland was for ages the patrimony of the sons of Niall, and from the kings of Meath, Tirconnell and Tirowen the Ardris were alternately drawn. This arrangement was viewed with disfavour by the kings of Cashel; their homage to the Ardris was given with reluctance, and sometimes they

[1] Halliday, *Scandinavian Kingdom of Dublin*, pp. 28-32.

[2] Thierry, *History of the Norman Conquest* (Bogue's European Library), vol. i. p. 61.

claimed to be Ardris themselves. Feidhlimidh (pronounced Félimy), one of the ablest and most ambitious of the southern princes, now filled the throne of Cashel. Too great to be a subject, unwilling to acknowledge a superior, or even an equal, he could see no reason why a king of Cashel should not also be King of Ireland. If he was, as is sometimes said, a bishop [1] as well as king, his virtues were not those which befit the episcopacy. He was careful to make his religion subservient to his ambition, and had little scruple as to the means he employed in the attainment of his ends. Three times in quick succession he plundered Clonmacnoise, and on one of these occasions (833) he spoiled and pillaged up to the church doors,[2] and "butchered the monks like sheep." The monasteries of Durrow and Kildare he also plundered, and from the fears and impotence of Foranen, the Primate of Armagh, then an exile at Kildare,[3] he extracted submission and homage. He overran Meath and Bregia (839), and then rested at Tara, in the ruined palace of the ancient kings. Sometimes he is counted among the Ardris, although he was never universally recognized. Concurrently with these events, disputes arose between rival claimants for the See of Armagh; the native princes took sides, and these contests were no less bitter than those between Feidhlimidh and his antagonists.[4]

But while the native princes were thus divided, the whole forces of the Northmen, latterly much augmented, ranged themselves under the able leadership of Turgesius. In their ships some sailed up the Shannon and cast anchor at Lough Ree, some remained at Limerick, some in Carlingford Bay, some at Dundalk, some at Lough Neagh; and while sixty ships were on the Boyne, sixty others were on the Liffey.[5] From these vessels they sallied forth and harassed the surrounding country. They plundered Clondalkin (833), Glendalough and Slane and

[1] *Wars of the Gael and Gall*, Todd's Introduction, p. 45.
[2] Healy, p. 275. [3] *Four Masters.*
[4] *Wars of the Gael and Gall*, Introduction, pp. 46-47; *Four Masters*, at 851.
[5] *Four Masters.*

the churches of Ormond (834), all Connaught (835), the kingdom of Meath and the churches of Lough Erne and Inniscaltra (836). Dublin was captured in the same year. Ulster was harassed and Armagh plundered (838), and Clonmacnoise and Clonfert and Lorrha and Tirdaglas were burned (841).

The monasteries everywhere were the first objects of attack. Here were the gold and silver vessels used in the service of the Church; here were the shrines of the saints; and here also was consigned for safe keeping the wealth of many, knowing that the monasteries were respected by the most lawless of the Irish, even in those lawless days. This wealth attracted the Northmen, for their desire of gain was insatiable. Added to this was their fierce heathen fanaticism. They remembered with bitterness all that their religion had suffered at the hands of Charlemagne—how the Saxon followers of Odin had been driven from their homes or murdered, and how all this had been done in the name of Christianity.[1] The time for revenge had come. In dishonouring Christ and His Church, they felt they were honouring their pagan gods, and in the name of Odin they massacred the priests and monks, desecrated the churches, and laid so many monasteries in ruins. Turgesius had the Primate of Armagh turned out of his See, and in imitation, or perhaps in mockery, became himself chief of the priests of Odin at Armagh; and his wife gave audience seated on the high altar of Clonmacnoise.[2] Verily, it seemed that the abomination of desolation had entered the holy places, and that, in Ireland at least, the vision of the prophet had been realized.

Keating[3] gives a detailed account of the miseries suffered by the Irish during the domination of Turgesius, and if all of it be true, the *Annals of Clonmacnoise* do not exaggerate when they compare their condition to that of the Christians under the Turks.[4] Every cantred had its Danish ruler, every village

[1] Halliday, pp. 6, 7, 8.

[2] *Wars of the Gael and Gall*, Introduction, pp. 48-49. [3] P. 426.

[4] P. 134. He declares that "the great Tamerlane, called the Scourge of God, could not be compared to them for cruelty."

its Danish sergeant, in every house a Danish soldier was billeted who acted in that house as absolute master. If the family had money it was taken, if they had good clothes they were seized and worn by the Danish soldier, if they had fowls they were eaten by him, if they had but one cow he used its milk, and he heeded neither the wants of the sick nor the cries of the little children. If the family had arms they were seized, if they had books they were torn or burned, and they were not allowed to entertain others or to be entertained themselves.[1] A yearly tribute of an ounce of gold was paid by each house, and if the head of the family failed to pay, his nose was cut off, whence the tax was called the "nosegelt." This has been explained by saying that each person had to pay taxes—that counting noses and counting numbers were the same;[2] but even such savagery as cutting off people's noses might be expected from the Danes if their record in other lands be remembered. To this intolerable oppression, resistance was offered by the natives, and sometimes with success. The Cinel-Conaill defeated them at Ballyshannon[3] (836), the Dalcassians at Lough Derg, but the progress of Turgesius was steady and persistent, and in 845 the northern portion of the country, as well as Meath and Connaught, lay helpless at his feet. A little more and the whole country would be conquered; but in 845 his career of conquest ended, for in that year he was defeated by Malachy, King of Meath, taken prisoner and put to death. It is said he was drowned at Lough Ennell, near Mullingar. Keating's account of how he was captured is not without interest. Turgesius had built a palace near the residence of Maelseachlainn or Malachy, King of Meath, and sometimes visited him; and on one of these occasions he saw and became enamoured of Maelseachlainn's daughter, whose appearance and manner were equally attractive. As he was already married he could not demand her in marriage,

[1] Keating, p. 426.

[2] *Wars of the Gael and Gall*, Introduction, p. 103, note 3.

[3] *Ibid.* chaps. 21 and 22, p. 21. The Cinel-Conaill were the descendants of Conall Gulban, son of Niall of the Nine Hostages, their territory being nearly co-extensive with the present county of Donegal (*Book of Rights*).

nor did he desire to pay her that honour, but merely wished to have her as one of his mistresses. The lady's father knew it would be dangerous to refuse, and agreed, with apparent readiness and goodwill, but stipulated that his daughter should be sent secretly to the Danish palace, so as to save appearances and lest the lady's character might suffer. He even promised that he would send with her fifteen other beautiful maidens whom Turgesius might also keep. At the appointed time the lady and her attendants arrived, and were received by Turgesius and fifteen of his ministers and favourites, and an entertainment was prepared. But the attendants sent with the princess, instead of being young women, were all young men of handsome appearance, disguised as females and wearing arms under their female attire. Instead of allowing their young mistress to be outraged by a hated pagan, at a given signal they rushed upon him, slew all his favourites, and carried himself away into captivity.[1]

The death of Turgesius revived the drooping spirits of the natives, and when Malachy, or Maelseachlainn, became Ardri (846) he vigorously attacked the invaders and was ably seconded by some of the provincial chiefs. The Danes were defeated in Westmeath (848), losing 700 in battle; in Tipperary they lost 240; at Balrothery (850), 200; at Rathallen, near Duleek, 300; they were also defeated at Farragh in Meath by Malachy.[2] They were much weakened and discouraged by their losses and abandoned several of their conquests. These various battles were fought principally with the Finn-galls or Norwegians; but a large fleet of the Dubh-galls arrived in Dublin (853). Instead of joining with the Finn-galls for the complete subjugation of Ireland, the two nations quarrelled, and a desperate naval battle was fought at Carlingford Bay, which lasted for three days and ended in the complete overthrow of the Finn-galls. A few years previously the Northmen had built a fortress at Athcliath or Dublin. The conquerors at Carlingford Bay, attracted by the advantageous position, took possession of the fortress, and

[1] Keating, pp. 428-32.

[2] *Wars of the Gael and Gall*, chap. 22; *Four Masters*.

established the kingdom of Dublin, with Olaf the White as their king.[1] To the Irish the change from Finn-galls to Dubh-galls was merely one of name, for both were equally ferocious and equally greedy of plunder. Olaf soon issued from Dublin and plundered Leinster and Munster, and they left nothing from Limerick to Cork that they did not ravage. They were not, however, so constantly successful as Turgesius and Aedh (863-879); the Ardri who succeeded Malachy inflicted upon them two serious defeats at Lough Foyle (867) and at Kilmore, near Drogheda (869), besides the battle of Kiladerry in Dublin (866).[2]

During the whole reign of Flann (879-915) there were no further arrivals of Northmen. In Dublin and along the coast the Danes were in permanent occupation, and were engaged for the most part in commerce, but for fresh settlers the inducements to come were few. These Northmen desired the glory of victory and the wealth that is obtained by successful war. Had they come in strong force, and fought under a single leader such as Turgesius, they would, no doubt, have conquered the whole country; but coming at different times and under different leaders, the resistance offered them was more effective, and the battles fought at Lough Foyle and Drogheda and elsewhere warned them that other contests also might end in defeat. Nor could victory itself bring them the wealth that they desired. The vessels of gold and silver had long since been taken from the churches, the shrines of the saints had been broken open, the monasteries were but sightless ruins, the inhabitants had been so often plundered that nothing remained to them but poverty and desolation, and from these possessions wealth could not be extracted. For other reasons, too, no fresh bands of Northmen appeared during this period. In the closing years of the ninth century, Harold Fairhair became supreme King of Norway.[3] Originally ruling but a portion of that country, he determined to extend his sway and consolidate the various small states—weak, lawless, and turbulent—into one powerful kingdom. To vanquish these warlike Vikings was not an easy task, but by

[1] Halliday, p. 23. [2] *Four Masters.* [3] Thierry, vol. i. p. 90.

patience and perseverance and superior military skill he prevailed. The defeated chiefs fought as long as it was possible, and then sullenly and reluctantly submitted. But old habits are not easily laid aside; they could not reconcile themselves to a life of law and settled government; they loved war and piracy, and against the new king and his government they often rebelled. Driven into exile, they founded settlements in the islands of the North Sea, fitted up expeditions, attacked passing vessels, and harassed the coasts of Norway itself, inflicting much damage on the inhabitants. Harold determined to chastise them; with his fleet he pursued them even to the Orkneys and the Hebrides; and many a bold Viking, who might look forward to the wealth and luxury of a more southern land, had his fleet scattered, his vessels sunk, and himself sent prematurely to Valhalla, to be entertained by Odin and his gods. Those who escaped, or did not incur the wrath of Harold, turned their thoughts to the coasts of France, where tempting prospects of plunder and conquest awaited them. The grandsons of Charlemagne shared between them the splendid inheritance of his Empire, but they did not inherit his genius to rule, or defend what they possessed; and while they were quarrelling among themselves, one of the greatest of the Norse Vikings, Rollo, descended upon the French coasts, sailed up the Seine, captured Rouen, laid siege to Paris, and repeatedly plundered the surrounding territory. Prompted by policy and fear, Charles the Simple made peace with Rollo, gave him the Duchy of Normandy and his daughter in marriage, and thus changed a fierce antagonist into the greatest bulwark of his throne.[1] Others of these Northmen plundered Brittany and even Italy; and in England they were firmly planted in Mercia, East Anglia and Northumbria.

It might have been thought that this period of repose from Danish invasion would have been used by the Irish to repair the ravages of war, and to organize their forces against future attack. But the time was spent otherwise. The thoughts of each clan were centred in itself. A neighbouring clan it

[1] Thierry, vol. i. pp. 94-97.

regarded with jealousy, viewed its increasing power with alarm, its influence with envy, its wealth with cupidity, and its misfortunes without regret. A century of Danish incursions had not yet taught these clansmen the advantages of combination, nor the evils of dissension, nor the necessity of unity. The Danes were aliens in race and creed; the Irish had suffered untold miseries at their hands, and felt they could have no security until the Danes were beaten. Being Irish, it is unnecessary to say that they were brave and did not shrink from fighting, but they fought as men of Meath or Tirowen, men of Desmond or Thomond. They did not realize that they were all men of Erin and had a common inheritance to defend. It was local interests alone they regarded, local jealousies that actuated them, and when they no longer had swarms of Northmen to combat, they turned their arms against each other; and instead of the period (879-915) being one of peace and preparation, it was a period of disastrous internal discord. Because the title of the Ardri was not fully and freely recognized in Munster, in revenge, Flann made war upon that province and plundered it from Kildare to Cork; Tirowen and Tirconnell he treated similarly.[1] The Cineal-Eoghain and the rest of Ulster were at war (892);[2] as if weary of peace, the Ardri overran Connaught (895); and a little later (898) the Connaughtmen were at war with Meath,[3] and Ossory was attacked by the Deisi. Again, on some pretext, the Ardri and the King of Leinster, in alliance, invaded Munster (906),[4] and plundered it from Gowran to Limerick. The reigning King of Cashel was Cormac, who was also a bishop. Collecting his forces, he attacked the Ardri and his ally, and at Moylena inflicted upon them well-merited defeat, and the same year he defeated the forces of Meath and Connaught by whom he had been assailed. Satisfied at having repelled all his assailants, he looked forward to a long period of peace, for his ambition was that of the scholar[5] rather than

[1] *Four Masters.* [2] *Ibid.* vol. ii. p. 543, note. [3] *Ibid.* vol. ii. p. 553.
[4] *Annals of Ulster*; the *Four Masters* gives the date 902.
[5] He was author of *Cormac's Glossary.* Vide *Four Masters*, vol. ii. p. 569, note.

the warrior. But his chief adviser was Flaherty, Abbot of Scattery Island, to whom the seclusion of a monastery was less agreeable than the excitement of the camp and the battlefield; and his advice to Cormac was to demand tribute of Leinster, and, following in the footsteps of Feidhlimidh, to claim that he was Ardri. With a large army he entered Leinster, and at Ballaghmoon, near Carlow, he was met by the combined forces of the Ardri and the kings of Leinster and Connaught. Munster was defeated with the loss of 6000 men, Cormac himself being among the slain.

During these years of internal discord the Danish colonies at Dublin, Waterford and Limerick were not idle. They were engaged principally in commerce; but old habits are not easily laid aside, the traditionary instinct of the Dane was to plunder, and beneath the merchant's garb the pirate could be discerned. Taking advantage of native divisions, they sometimes sallied forth from their strongholds and committed their usual depredations. In native disputes their aid was often sought, for with the Irish chiefs the passion of revenge had consumed all other passions, and to defeat their own countrymen they welcomed the aid of the pagan and the pirate. The son of Olaf the White, King of Dublin, by name Thorsten the Red, had married a granddaughter of Carroll, King of Ossory,[1] and when Olaf, with his friend and ally Ivar, the son of Regnar Lodbrog, was engaged in conquering East Anglia and Northumbria (866-867) and plundering Scotland (870),[2] Carroll was put in possession of Dublin, to hold it for the Danes and to defend it against native assaults. Olaf returned to Ireland from Scotland (870), bringing with him great booty, but the following year he was slain in battle, and a year later Ivar died.[3] Ivar's brother—Halfdene—assuming command, continued his wars in Northumbria and Mercia, and was able, in addition, to plunder the Picts and Britons of Strathclyde; nor was it until 876 that he resolved to return to Ireland and claim the kingdom which the good sword of Olaf had won. But the

[1] *Wars of the Gael and Gall*, p. 264, Appendix D.
[2] Halliday, pp. 36-38.
[3] *Ibid.* p. 40.

old quarrels between the Finn-galls and Dubh-galls were revived; the Finn-galls, resenting the rule of Halfdene, revolted, and in a naval battle at Strangford Lough, in which the White Strangers and the Black Strangers contended for supremacy, Halfdene was slain.[1] This series of fatalities among the Danish leaders, added to the necessity of guarding their possessions in England, left Dublin almost forgotten—until Carroll, who was merely the ally and representative of the Danish kings, became King of Dublin himself,[2] a position he held till his death (885), when Sitric, the son of Ivar, came to Dublin and became king. But Carroll, when he reigned, was King of Dublin by favour of the Danes; he was their ally and friend, he defended Dublin by their arms and with the same readiness as themselves, he allowed them to plunder the Irish, and even led them to plunder; and under Sitric the war and plunder were continued. The Danes plundered Kildare[3] (885), defeated the Ardri[4] (887), burned Glendalough[5] (889), Kildare[6] (890), Armagh[7] (894), and allying themselves with the Deisi (893) they overran Ossory. These depredations did not pass unavenged. The Limerick Danes were defeated (887), and again four years later; in Wexford, Waterford and Connaught the Danes were also defeated;[8] Olaf of Dublin was beaten (895), and 800 of his army slain;[9] but the most important victory was the capture of Dublin[10] (901) by the Leinstermen. The Danes were expelled from the city, and for the remainder of Flann's reign the most valued possession of the Irish Danes was in native hands.

In the same year that Niall Glundubh became Ardri (915), fresh swarms of Northmen appeared. Regnal landed at Waterford and joined those who had arrived there in 912, and under his leadership Munster was ravaged. The Ardri with his army

[1] Halliday, pp. 43-44. [2] *Ibid.* p. 45.
[3] *Four Masters*, at year 883; *Annals of Ulster*, 885.
[4] *Ibid.* at 885. [5] *Ibid.* at 886. [6] *Ibid.* at 887.
[7] *Ibid.* at 893. [8] *Ibid.* at 888. [9] *Ibid.* at 891.
[10] *Wars of the Gael and Gall*, Todd's Introduction, p. 82; *Four Masters*, at 897.

marched south, and encountered the Danes at a place called Tobar Glethrach (915), the battle being indecisive. In the following year, Sitric landed at Dublin, captured the city, and defeated the Leinstermen at Cenn Fuat, and then plundered Kildare.[1] During his absence in England, the Ardri attempted the capture of the city, and appears to have been quite confident of success. But his confidence was misplaced: the sons of Sitric and Reginald, not content with acting on the defensive, boldly issued from the walls and defeated the Ardri, Niall, at Kilmashoge, near Rathfarnham. The Ardri himself was killed, so also were several princes, and such was the loss sustained that the bards sang of that day "The destructive morn of Athcliath."[2] Armagh was plundered (921), Dublin and Waterford were unassailable Danish strongholds, but it was at Limerick that Danish power was most difficult to be borne.

The Danish leader was Tomar, whose character and exploits recall the memory of Turgesius. From Limerick he despatched a fleet up the Shannon, plundered Clonmacnoise and the religious establishments at Lough Ree; and along the Shannon the inhabitants were ground down with every form of oppression. Their condition is described by Macliag in his *Wars of the Gael and Gall*.[3] "They killed the kings and the chieftains, the heirs to the crown and the royal princes of Erin. They killed the brave and the valiant and the stout knights, champions and soldiers and young lords and the greater part of the heroes and warriors of the entire Gael; and they brought them under tribute and servitude; they reduced them to bondage and slavery. Many were the blooming women and comely maidens and blue-eyed young women and well-brought-up youths and valiant champions they carried into bondage over the broad green sea. Alas, many and frequent were the bright and brilliant eyes that were suffused with tears and dimmed with grief and despair at the separation of son from father, and daughter from mother, and brother from brother, and

[1] Halliday, p. 56. [2] *Ibid.* pp. 58-59.
[3] Chap. 36, p. 43.

relatives from their race and tribe." Yet these Danes were sometimes defeated, and from out the gloom of such widespread disaster one heroic figure appeared, whose example must have had an inspiriting effect on his countrymen. This was Muirchertach, son of Niall Glundubh. His father had fallen in battle with the Danes—the battle of Kilmashoge—and he seems to have sworn that his father's death would be avenged. With his own forces of Tirowen he fought the Danes for twenty years, inflicting on them many defeats, and died (943), falling at the battle of Ardee, in which the Danes, under Blacar, were victors.[1] Muirchertach was heir to the Ardri's throne, and, to ensure recognition of his rights, he had made a circuit of Ireland, taking hostages as he went along.[2] His journey was made in winter, and to protect his troops from the cold he had them clothed in leather coats, whence he has been called Muirchertach of the Leather Coats. The new Ardri, Congalach, defeated the Danes (944)[3] at Dublin, and even carried away most of the inhabitants into captivity, and a few years later (948)[4] he also defeated them with heavy loss, their leader Blacar being among the slain. He again defeated them at Muine Brecain (951), but in 956[5] the Ardri was defeated and slain by the Danes aided by the Leinstermen. During the whole reign of Domhnall (956-980) only one great battle was fought—that of Kilmore in Meath, in which the Danes were victorious, but with the accession of Malachy II. greater events were at hand.

Either from policy or conviction, the Dublin Danes had now become Christians, and had many alliances in marriage with some of the Irish; but the Christian prohibition not to rob or steal they little understood, or at least little observed. As Christians, they made war as readily and with as little justification as when they were yet pagans, and had as little scruple about sacking a monastery or church as when they marched

[1] *Four Masters*, at 941.

[2] Halliday, p. 72. It appears among the hostages was the son of Sitric, the Danish King of Dublin.

[3] *Four Masters*, at 942. [4] *Ibid.* at 946. [5] *Ibid.* at 954.

under the banners of Odin. Malachy determined to chastise them, and the very year he became Ardri (980) he defeated them at Tara,[1] where Regnall, son of Olaf, King of Dublin, was killed. With a heavy heart, as if he foresaw the ruin of his dynasty, Olaf resigned the crown to his son Sitric, and went on a pilgrimage to Iona. In that venerable monastery, so often laid in ruins by his kinsmen, he spent the closing years of his life, and there also he died,[2] consoled by the children of St. Columba's. Malachy followed up his successes at Tara by attacking and capturing the city of Dublin. He allowed the Danes to remain, but compelled them to pay tribute, and to release all their captives, amounting to two thousand, including Domhnall, King of Leinster.[3] He proclaimed that every one of the Gaels in captivity with the foreigners was free to go to his own territory. Their captivity and the hardships it entailed has been compared to that more famous one of Babylon; in the vigorous language of the *Four Masters* it was "next to captivity of hell." With singular ingratitude the Leinster king was no sooner free from Danish bonds than he allied himself with the Danes and turned his arms against his deliverer; but Malachy crushed this confederacy and overran Leinster (983).[4] He established his authority in Connaught (985),[5] and twice (989 and 996) he suppressed revolts in Dublin and compelled that city to pay him tribute. On the last of these occasions he took away the sword and collar of Tomar, relics much prized by the Danes, and afterwards Malachy wore this golden collar himself.[6] The panegyrists of Brian Boru, who had already become all-powerful in Munster, and was destined to become more powerful still, do not wish to admit that he was ever defeated by Malachy. But this is to ignore, or to suppress, historic facts.[7] Malachy defeated him in Thomond (990), in Connaught (992), and again (996) in

[1] *Four Masters*, at 979.

[2] The year of his death is uncertain, and one of the Sagas asserts that he was in Dublin in 994 (Halliday, pp. 79-80).

[3] *Wars of the Gael and Gall*, p. 47.

[4] *Four Masters*.

[5] *Ibid.* at 984.

[6] *Ibid.* vol. ii. p. 733, note.

[7] *Wars of the Gael and Gall*, Todd's Introduction, p. 142.

IRELAND
BEFORE THE ANGLO-NORMAN INVASION
The parts coloured Red indicate the position of the Danish Settlements
Longitude West of Greenwich
Walker & Graham

Tipperary. Menaced by a new and powerful coalition—the Danes of Dublin and Maelmorra (Maelmordha), King of Leinster—these two chiefs, Malachy and Brian, laying aside their personal jealousies, joined against the common enemy, and at the battle of Glenmama (999) they fought side by side.

The saying has been attributed to Alexander the Great that the world cannot be ruled by two suns, nor can it contain two empires of the greatest magnitude, without disturbing the peace of nations ;[1] and with Malachy and Brian, each supreme in his own province, each without a superior or a rival, it seemed impossible that the peace of Ireland could be secured. Malachy's career had been hitherto an unbroken series of triumphs, and Brian, though sometimes repulsed, had been usually victorious and had never suffered a serious reverse. His power had grown steadily, and, from being merely chief of the Dalcassians, he had become unquestioned monarch of Munster, and the most powerful and ablest ruler that Munster had ever known. Perhaps for the sake of peace, more probably because of his impotence, Malachy had already, by treaty, recognized Brian as king of the southern half of Ireland, thus partially abdicating and no longer demanding from Leath Mhogha either tribute or submission. All this did not satisfy Brian ; he was ambitious and, having rid himself of a superior, he could no longer tolerate an equal. With Sitric and the Danes and with Maelmorra of Leinster, whom he had lately fought, he made alliances, and strengthened by these, without warning, and in the teeth of his treaty with Malachy, he entered Meath and set up his headquarters at Tara. Deserted by his kinsmen in the north, Malachy with his own forces of Meath felt unable to make headway against so many enemies, and acknowledged Brian as Ardri. Thus did the sceptre pass from the descendants of the great Niall, after an interval of nearly six centuries ; and without doubt Malachy, from whose hands it passed, was one of the greatest of that royal line.

[1] *Quintus Curtius*, lib. iv. chap. 2.

CHAPTER IX

The Dalcassian Kings

IN the second century, among the chieftains who ruled the Irish clans there were two who stood out in special prominence —Eoghan or Owen Mór, sometimes called Mogh Nuadhat, and Conn of the Hundred Battles. Neither wished to have a superior, nor an equal; each aimed at supreme power; they fought often and with varying success, and at length made peace by dividing the sovereignty of Ireland between them. The dividing-line extended from Dublin due west to Galway Bay, and was marked by a line of low sand-hills.[1] North of this line was Leath Chuin, or Conn's half, which included Ulster and Meath and Connaught. South of the line was Leath Mhogha, or Owen's half, which included Desmond and Thomond and Leinster, though at no time was Leinster disposed to acquiesce in the rule of a southern Ardri, or to acknowledge any allegiance to a southern king.[2] Still unsatisfied, still hoping to extend his power, Owen Mór, after an interval of a year, made war upon the northern monarch.[3] Conn had the assistance of the famous Red Branch knights, and above all of Goll, the Firbolg chief of the militia of Connaught,[4] and, at the battle of Moylena, Owen was defeated and slain.[5] With his death the power of his family sank even more rapidly than it rose, and though Owen's son, Oilioll Olum, was undisputed

[1] Called Esker-Riada, and terminated at Clarenbridge in Galway (*Four Masters*, vol. i. p. 104).

[2] *Book of Rights*, pp. 58-59, note. [3] *Annals of Clonmacnoise*, p. 59.

[4] Lady Ferguson, *The Irish before the Conquest*, p. 97.

[5] As Conn is said to have enjoyed peace for twenty years after this battle, and as he died in 157 (*Four Masters*), the date of the battle is ascertained as 137.

ruler of Desmond and Thomond, and was styled king of the southern half of Ireland, his authority over Leinster was not recognized. In modern times the Irish farmer has often divided his farm between two or more of his children, leaving to each an inheritance of poverty. In a similar spirit, and with equally unfortunate results, did Oilioll Olum divide his kingdom between his two sons, Eoghan and Cormac Cas; the descendants of the former, in later times, being often called the Eoghanachts, and those of the latter the Dalcassians. To Eoghan, who was the elder, he left the province of Desmond, to Cormac, Thomond, directing that the supreme honour of King of Munster, with the royal residence at Cashel, should be alternately held by their descendants.[1] The arrangement seemed equitable enough, but it weakened the power of Munster by dividing it; it fostered jealousies and rivalries, and the contests were frequent and bitter between the kings of Desmond and Thomond for the higher position of King of Munster.

Brian Boru was of the family of Cormac Cas. His father was Kennedy, son of Lorcan. He was slain in battle with the Danes (951).[2] At his death Brian was but a lad of ten years. His elder brother also, Donchuad, had been killed fighting the Danes (948), and the young prince must have imbibed from his earliest years a hatred of these foreigners; and what he saw with his own eyes and heard with his own ears must have intensified that hate. The oppression of Tomar was still fresh in the minds of men, and the sons of Ivar, who then ruled at Limerick,[3] followed but too faithfully in Tomar's footsteps. The Danish ships, which so often spread their sails upon the Shannon, still carried, as in Tomar's time, desolation and death to many a home; and the churches and monasteries on Lough Ree and the islands of the Shannon were no sooner repaired than they were again overwhelmed in ruin. In his father's palace at Kincora he had often heard of how the poor

[1] *Book of Rights*, p. 72, note.

[2] *Annals of Innisfallen*, quoted by Todd, Introd. to *Wars of the Gael and Gall*, p. 97.

[3] *Wars of the Gael and Gall*, Introduction, p. 105.

man's cattle had been carried off, how his children had been swept away into slavery, and how these pagans, with veneration for neither God nor man, loved to heap indignities on his Church and mocked at the mysteries of his faith. Often he saw his clansmen go forth to battle in proud array, and come back, their ranks broken and thinned, leaving their best and bravest behind them, struck down by the Danish battle-axes. The bards, who recounted the gallant deeds of the Dalcassians, had also to chronicle their defeats, and the piteous wail of the widow and the orphan too often replaced the exulting cry of victory. As he listened to the harper's song, if his cheeks glowed with pride at the recital of his kinsmen's deeds, his heart also melted with pity as he heard the mournful song of the captive held in Danish bonds and pining for his kindred and his home. For the harper excited sympathy for the oppressed, as well as emulation for the brave, and often the saddening strains of captivity and suffering were mingled with the livelier notes of the battle-march. Filled with pity for his oppressed kinsmen, and with indignation against their oppressors, he must have often longed to be at the head of his gallant clansmen, and to wrest from the grasp of these haughty foreigners those fertile fields along the Shannon which were the birthright of his family and his race.

Brian's elder brother, Mahon, became King of Thomond (951), his claims of descent being recognized by the chiefs of the Dalcassians. He was no less entitled to be King of Munster, for the last king was of the Eoghanacht line, and, by the will of Oilioll Olum, it was the right of Mahon to succeed. But the chiefs of Desmond refused to recognize him, nor did they for several years, and then only with reluctance. Mahon's first concern was with the Danes. The ancient territory of Thomond included the present county of Clare, and that part of Galway from Galway Bay eastward in a straight line to where the Suck mingles its waters with the Shannon, and beyond the Shannon, eastward still to Ossory and southwards below the city of Limerick.[1] With this fine province the

[1] *Book of Rights*, p. 260. The southern boundary of Thomond is still preserved in that of the diocese of Killaloe.

Danes had played sad havoc. From their strongholds at Limerick and Tradree[1] they were absolute masters of the Shannon, and the portion eastward to Ossory was so much in their power that Mahon finally abandoned it and had to content himself with the district west of the Shannon. Nor was even this part of Thomond free. The Danes were progressing westwards, and all the indications were that all Thomond would speedily become their prey. For a time Mahon, aided by Brian, kept up a desultory and indecisive struggle, and then he made peace with the Danes. To this peace Brian refused to consent, and at the head of a few followers, equally determined and desperate as himself, he carried on the warfare still. He avoided pitched battles with the enemy, fell upon small detached parties of them, harassed them by night, waylaid them on their marches, cut them off in twos and threes and fives, and made the whole district west of the Shannon unsafe for them except while they were within the shelter of their strongholds. In this guerilla warfare the sufferings of himself and his men were great. They had to often change their encampments, they had to sleep in woods and caves, and worn out, without sleep and often without food, in addition to their losses in battle, their numbers became so reduced that at last Brian had but fifteen men under his command.[2] Mahon remonstrated with him, and pointed out the futility of his conduct in wasting his strength and the lives of his clansmen against overwhelming odds. Brian's answer was a reproach. They should not, he avowed, abandon to dark foreigners and black grim Gentiles the inheritance which their fathers and grandfathers had transmitted to them, and which in their own day they had known how to defend;[3] and he was sure that his grandfather Lorcan would have never made such a peace as Mahon had done, neither would Lughaidh Menn, nor Corc, the son of Cas, the man who had first routed the foreigners. Either his reasons or his reproaches impressed Mahon. He called together the clansmen of Thomond to consult, and

[1] Near Bunratty, on the Clare side of the Shannon.

[2] *Wars of the Gael and Gall*, pp. 61-62. [3] *Ibid.* pp. 67-70.

unanimously they declared for war. With Mahon and Brian at their head they crossed the Shannon, captured the Danish strongholds, and, joined by the friendly tribes of the Eoghanachts and Muskerry,[1] they wreaked ample vengeance on the Danes, and finally (964) they entered Cashel in triumph.

While these events were in progress Ivar of Limerick seemed to slumber, but the rapid progress of Mahon roused him from his repose. As head of the Munster Danes he viewed their defeat with sorrow, and the sudden advancement of Mahon with alarm. To crush these aspiring Dalcassians, he summoned the Danes from all quarters of Munster. Nor was he without native allies, for Molloy, King of Desmond, and Donovan of Hy-Carbry and Hy-Fidghente were jealous of Mahon, and with strange perversity, though they hated the Danes, they hated their own countrymen more; and willingly and even eagerly they joined Ivar.[2] This powerful confederacy Mahon and Brian took measures to resist. The friendly Munster clans answered their call, even the Delbna[3] clan from Connaught came to their assistance, and when all were assembled they determined to await at Sulcoit, or Solohead (968), the attack of the advancing Danes. The place, some two miles north-west of Tipperary, was covered by a wood of sallow trees, which was used as shelter by the Irish troops. We do not know what were the numbers engaged, nor the tactics pursued; but it was the Danes who attacked, and some, if not all, of them were clothed in coats of mail,[4] but this did not avail them. The Irish had by that time learned to use the battle-axe as dexterously as the Danes themselves, recent victories had

[1] They were the descendants of Cairbré Musc, King of Ireland in the third century. Their territories included the present baronies of East and West Muskerry, county of Cork, and those of Clanwilliam and Upper and Lower Ormond, county of Tipperary (*Wars of the Gael and Gall*, Todd's Introd. p. 115). *Vide* also *Book of Rights*, pp. 42-45.

[2] *Wars of the Gael and Gall*, pp. 73-75.

[3] *Book of Rights*, p. 105. Their territory was the present barony of Moycullen (Galway). They were descended, like the O'Briens, from Cormac Cas.

[4] *Gael and Gall*, p. 77. There is mention made of a "battalion of horsemen in corselets."

given them courage, and the memory of past wrongs nerved their arms in the fight. After a furious contest, lasting from sunrise to mid-day, the Danes retreated on all sides, pursued by the victorious Irish, and were slaughtered without mercy. With little delay, Mahon and Brian advanced to Limerick, and in the city fort, to which the Danes fled, they were mercilessly cut down and both fort and city plundered and burned. The spoils that fell to the victors are enumerated:—"beautiful and foreign saddles; jewels, gold and silver, and silks; soft, youthful, bright girls; blooming, silk-clad women; active, well-formed boys." The trembling captives were marshalled on the hillocks of Saingel, outside Limerick, and "every one that was fit for war was put to death, and every one that was fit for a slave was enslaved."[1] Mahon secured his position by getting hostages from the various Munster clans, taking special care to have hostages from Donovan and Molloy. Their ally, Ivar, fled with a remnant of his forces to Scattery Island, which henceforth became his stronghold.[2]

Under Mahon's vigorous rule the Danes were kept in check, the native chiefs were awed into submission, the clamour of faction was stilled, and Munster, for nearly eight years, enjoyed the blessings of peace. All this was little suited to Ivar and his Danes. Cooped up in their island stronghold in the Shannon, they were compelled to confine themselves to the peaceful occupations of commerce, and had to desist from violence and plunder, while the Munster clans acquiesced in the rule of Mahon and contentedly reposed under the protecting shelter of his power. To stir up strife, to promote discord, to set clan against clan, above all to weaken and, if possible, to destroy Mahon, was now Ivar's ambition. To Donovan and Molloy he again appealed, asking them if they would tamely submit to be subjects of him whom they had long held as inferior to themselves. The seed was cast upon a not unfruitful soil. Both chiefs were the representatives of Eoghan, and the sons of Eoghan regarded with disdain the chiefs of the Dalcassians. With larger territory and greater

[1] *Gael and Gall*, pp. 79-81. [2] *Ibid.* p. 85.

power, they often set at defiance the will of Oilioll Olum, and seldom acknowledged any of the Dalcassians as King of Munster. This inherited antipathy had been already shown by Donovan and Molloy, and it was embittered by recent defeat. They believed that the present power of Thomond was due to the commanding talents of Mahon, and that if he were removed the predominance of Desmond would return. Filled with these hopes, they entered into a conspiracy with Ivar[1] and perpetrated a heinous crime, which has covered their names with perpetual infamy. Pretending friendship, Donovan invited Mahon to a banquet at his palace at Bruree. Mahon went, but as he had experience already of Donovan's treachery, he was distrustful, and stipulated for the safe conduct of the Bishop of Cork, and besides, he carried on his person the Gospel of St. Finbarr, a relic much venerated in the Irish Church. Thus protected, he counted on immunity from foul play. But Donovan would be restrained by no guarantees; he made Mahon prisoner and sent him southwards to Molloy, to be dealt with as they had already agreed. To lull suspicion, Molloy sent one of the Cork clergy with the escort which he sent north, and to which Mahon was to be delivered, but he had also given secret orders that he was to be murdered; and at a place called in modern times Redchair, on the confines of Limerick and Cork, and on the road from Kilmallock to Fermoy, the deed was done. The priest was unsuspecting and so also was the Bishop of Cork, who accompanied Molloy, and was some distance in the rear. Mahon was unarmed, and seeing the murderer about to strike, he threw to the priest the Gospel of St. Finbarr, lest it might be stained with his blood; but the fatal blow had been already struck, the shrine containing the book was bespattered with his blood, and with the sword plunged in his heart, Mahon fell dead. The horrified Bishop of Cork, turning to Molloy, asked what it all meant. He was answered with a sneer. "Cure yonder man," said Molloy, and putting spurs to his horse he rapidly rode away.[2]

[1] *Gael and Gall*, pp. 85-87.

[2] Healy's *Ancient Schools and Scholars*, pp. 484-5; *Gael and Gall*, p. 89.

By the rule of alternate succession Molloy became King of Munster. Freed from the hated superiority of Mahon, backed by Donovan and Ivar, he regarded his position as unassailable, never thinking that Brian, the new King of Thomond, had ability or resources equal to those of Mahon. He was destined to discover his error. In the quaint language of MacLiag, Brian was not a stone in place of an egg, nor a wisp of hay in place of a club, but he was a hero in place of a hero.[1] He deeply mourned his brother's death, with whom he had shared so many sorrows and so many triumphs, but the days of mourning soon passed and he turned to the sterner duty of retribution and revenge. His first attack was on the Danes. In Scattery Island they thought themselves safe; the memory and sanctity of St. Senanus still hovered over the spot; and they expected that the holy associations of the place would shield them from Brian's rage.[2] But Brian was resolved on extirpating them, and aided by his kinsmen the O'Donnells of Corcabascin, he manned a fleet, landed on the island, and almost annihilated the Danes (977), among the slain being Ivar and his sons. A remnant of the Limerick Danes under Harold now joined Donovan, and against this combination Brian turned his victorious arms. Entering Hy-Fidghente, he captured Donovan's fortress of Cathair Cuan, and both Harold and Donovan were killed.[3] Almost immediately he attacked Molloy, and at Bealach Leachta, near Macroom, he defeated him (978), with the loss of 1200 men, Molloy himself falling in the battle.[4] In this way were the murderers of Mahon punished for their crime.

These victories made Brian undisputed King of Munster, and far beyond its limits he soon carried the terror of his name. The Deisi, who showed some sympathy with his late enemies, he compelled to give hostages; he interdicted the churches throughout Munster from giving sanctuary either to rebels or thieves; the Danes of Waterford became his subjects, or at

[1] *Gael and Gall*, p. 101.

[2] Indeed, the *Four Masters* (vol. ii. p. 705) says that the island was *violated* by Brian.

[3] *Gael and Gall*, p. 103. [4] *Ibid.* p. 107.

least his allies ; he imprisoned Gillapatrick, King of Ossory, and made his province tributary ; nor was he satisfied until he entered Leinster (984) and received homage from Domhnall Claen, its king. Thus did he become monarch of the southern half of Ireland, and ruled over the whole extent of territory once ruled by his ancestor, Eoghan More. But it is the nature of ambition to be insatiable, and even with the ample enlargement of his dominions Brian was not yet satisfied. With three hundred vessels he sailed up the Shannon, ravaged Meath and Brefny, and perpetrated great evils in Connaught (988), killing the son of the Connaught Crown Prince.[1] His victorious progress filled the Ardri with alarm, nor was Malachy one to have his rights thus openly invaded, and, above all, to have his hereditary territory of Meath ravaged with impunity. Carrying the war into Brian's own territory, he entered Thomond, and defeated the Dalcassians (990), with the loss of 600 men.[2] In the plain of Magh-Adhair, and under the shade of a great tree, the kings of Thomond had always been solemnly inaugurated, in the presence of representatives of all the Dalcassian clans. In indignation Malachy tore up this venerable tree, cut it into pieces, and used it to roof part of his palace.[3] Two years later he defeated Brian in Meath, and a little later still (996) he defeated him near Nenagh.[4] How this war between two such able chiefs would have ended, it was impossible to foresee; but both had the sense and patriotism to wish it ended, and at Plein-Pattoigi[5] in Westmeath, on the shores of Lough Owell, they met (998) and agreed, as did Conn and Eoghan in olden days, to divide Ireland between them. Munster and Leinster, as also the tribes of Hy-Fiachrach and Hy-Many, were given to Brian, and the sole sovereignty of Leath Chuin, with this exception, to belong to Malachy, without war or trespass from Brian. The two kings became allies and friends, and in more than one hour of trial they fought subsequently side by side.

[1] *Gael and Gall*, pp. 107-9. [2] *Four Masters.*
[3] White's *History of Clare*, p. 54.
[4] The southern historians are silent about these victories.
[5] *Gael and Gall*, p. 109 ; Introd. p. 142.

The power of the Limerick Danes was now broken; the Danes of Waterford crouched in submission at Brian's feet, and in his war in Connaught were proud to fight in his army; but the Dublin Danes were still strong. They had been compelled to pay tribute to Malachy, but the tribute did not appreciably diminish their resources. Transferred from Malachy to Brian, they resolved to revolt against their new master. Perhaps they were encouraged by his recent defeats at the hands of Malachy; perhaps they hoped that the alliance between the two kings would not be either cordial or lasting, and that jealousies would arise to mar its efficacy; but they hoped most of all from their alliance with Maelmorra, King of Leinster, who placed the whole resources of his kingdom at their command. Brian was not one to delay when rebellion had to be crushed, and rapidly mustering his forces, he marched towards Dublin. On his way he was joined by Malachy, and to the joy of the whole nation, so long wearied with discord, the two kings fought together against the common enemy. In the county of Wicklow, near the present town of Dunlavin, the battle was fought (1000). A low range of hills, running parallel to the Wicklow mountains, is here cut by the valley of Glenmama, and in this valley the opposing forces met.[1] The broader plains of Kildare would have better suited the Danish cavalry, and thither they were hastening, but the rapidity of Brian's march disconcerted them, and in a narrow space the use of cavalry was of little advantage. After a severe contest the Irish forces were victorious, the Danes losing 4000, among them Harold, the Danish Crown Prince. Maelmorra of Leinster, feeling how guilty he had been, dreaded falling into the hands of his enemies, and hid himself in a yew tree;[2] but he was discovered and dragged from his hiding-place by Murrogh, son of Brian, though his life was spared. Without delay the conquerors entered Dublin. The spoils in the captured city were immense and for the most part fell to Brian. Gold, silver, bronze, precious stones, "buffalo horns and beautiful goblets," and to these are added many women, boys and girls

[1] *Gael and Gall*, p. 111; Introd. pp. 145-6.
[2] *Ibid.* p. 119.

who were carried away into slavery by the Irish.[1] From Dublin, Brian ravaged Leinster, levelled its fortresses, burned its woods, and then returned to Kincora, laden with spoil.

In the light of subsequent events it seems evident that before his treaty with Malachy, Brian had determined to become Ardri himself. The vigour and capacity of Malachy caused him to dissemble, but his plans were postponed rather than abandoned, and when the Danes and Leinster were vanquished, he thought the opportune moment had arrived. With his late enemies he formed alliances, giving his daughter to Sitric, the Danish King of Dublin, in marriage, and himself taking Sitric's mother, Gormfhlaeth, who was sister of Maelmorra of Leinster.[2] Aided by these new allies, and in violation of his treaty with Malachy, he entered Meath and demanded hostages. The cavalry of his Danish allies pushed forward in advance; Malachy fell upon them and cut them to pieces,[3] and Brian, disconcerted by this disaster, withdrew. But he was tenacious and persevering, and the next year (1002) he again entered Meath, established his headquarters at Tara, and peremptorily demanded that Malachy should abdicate in his favour.

For nearly 600 years the supreme position of Ardri had belonged to the descendants of Niall—the chiefs of Meath, Tirowen and Tirconnell. The succession was sometimes irregular and often disputed, but it had been always confined to the same family, and from the ninth century it had been narrowed down to the princes of Meath and Tirowen; and among these the rule of alternate succession prevailed, an arrangement similar to that which existed in the south between the kings of Desmond and Thomond. Time had given stability to the arrangement, and possession of the throne for centuries had established prescriptive rights of which few royal houses in that age could boast. Even the most ambitious hesitated to assail a dynasty which the changes of centuries had not overturned, and, except Feidhlimidh in the ninth and Cormac in

[1] *Gael and Gall*, pp. 115-17. [2] *Ibid.* p. 119; Introd. pp. 148-9.
[3] *Four Masters*, at the year 999.

the tenth century, no king of either north or south had presumed to take the honour from the house of Niall. Nor was there in the eleventh century among these princes the same discord as in the centuries which had passed. The number of Ardris who died peaceably was increasingly large, and of those who had fallen in battle all, or nearly all, had fallen in battle with the Danes. Malachy was no mere faction fighter: he knew the evils of dissension; he appreciated the advantage of a strong central government, strong enough to make itself respected and feared; he recognized the great capacity of Brian, knew that Brian's resources were great, and that with the Danes and Leinstermen as allies his power seemed overwhelming. Yet his own title to the supreme position was unquestioned; what he had inherited he was unwilling to abandon without a struggle; and if he could have obtained the help of the northern princes, he would have fought rather than submitted. To Aedh of Tirowen,[1] Eochaidh of Uladh and Cathal of Connaught he sent Slevin, his Chief Bard, who appealed for aid to those princes with a bard's impassioned eloquence.[2] He indignantly asked Aedh was he going to submit to one who was but lately the chief of a Munster clan, was he going to disgrace the memory of his ancestors and surrender without a blow the inheritance won by the genius of the great Niall? Aedh's answer was that whenever a Tirowen prince was Ardri, he was able to defend his position, and that he would not risk his life in battle with the Dalcassians in defence of sovereignty for any other man. Hoping to succeed where his Chief Bard had failed, Malachy appealed to Aedh in person, offered even to abdicate in Aedh's favour and to fight by his side. This offer Aedh was willing to accept; but his clansmen had to be consulted, and they decided to reject it, except on the insulting condition that Malachy would surrender to Tirowen half of his ancestral territory of Meath. Disgusted and disheartened, Malachy returned home, called his clansmen together, and the

[1] Aedh was Malachy's uncle, and had therefore a personal interest in maintaining the supremacy of Leath Chuin.

[2] *Gael and Gall*, pp. 121-7.

decision was to submit to Brian. With twelve score horsemen, Malachy rode to Tara and submitted to Brian, telling him that he would have fought if he could have got the assistance that he sought.[1] He was received with every mark of respect and became Brian's ally and friend.

The resources of the new Ardri were such that no power in Ireland could successfully resist him. Yet the northern princes Aedh and Eochaidh still held out, and the submission of Cathal of Connaught was sullen and reluctant. With a strong fleet Brian sailed up the Shannon, menaced Connaught with a large army at Athlone, and Cathal was compelled to give the requisite hostages.[2] In the same year (1003) the Ardri marched northwards as far as Dundalk, where he had a conference with Aedh and Eochaidh and made a truce with them for a year. When the year was over he again marched northwards and received submission from all as far as Armagh; but in the meantime the northern princes had quarrelled and gone to war, and at Craebh Tulcha[3] both Aedh and Eochaidh were slain. The favourable moment was seized by Brian and he took hostages from all the north. On his way south he stopped at Armagh and laid an offering of twenty ounces of gold on the high altar of the church, a fact commemorated in the *Book of Armagh*. Perhaps, as Todd thinks, by this politic measure he wished to secure the goodwill of the clergy and obtain for his infant dynasty the prestige of the Church's support. The submission of the more powerful princes secured, he might feel safe upon his throne; but there were still some lesser chiefs from whom trouble, if not danger, might arise. To guard against such a contingency he made a circuit of the whole country, taking hostages as he went along. With the Dublin and Waterford Danes and his own Munster clans he left Kincora (1005), passed through Roscommon, where he was joined by the Connaughtmen, thence over the Curlew mountains through Sligo, Leitrim, Donegal and Tyrone, thence

[1] *Gael and Gall*, p. 131. [2] *Ibid.* p. 133.

[3] *Four Masters*, at 1003. The place is now called Crewe, near Glenavy, in the barony of Upper Masserene, county of Antrim.

to Dalriada, Uladh and Dalaraidhe,[1] and south to Meath, where his followers were disbanded, the Connaughtmen going west, the Danes to Dublin and Waterford, and Brian himself to Kincora.[2]

The Ardri was then past his sixtieth year, and in his old age he might have expected peace after so many wars and rest after so many labours. His wish was to repair in peace the ravages of war. Roads and bridges were constructed, harbours built, new churches erected and ruined ones repaired, and as a terror to rebellion several strong fortresses were erected throughout Munster.[3] Under his vigorous rule justice was administered with impartiality, lawlessness was suppressed, the piracy of the Dane and the foray of the native chief were alike ended ; and the legend has survived that a maiden, young, beautiful and richly dressed, and with a gold ring on her wand, might have passed unmolested from Tory Island to Glandore.[4] In the churches the priest could offer Mass and the people worship in security, the monks in their convents chanted the psalms as of old, the hermit fasted and prayed without his devotions being interrupted by a pagan foe, and in the schools and colleges erected and liberally endowed the Ollamh was paid to teach and the children encouraged to learn. Engaged wholly in commerce, the Danes were rapidly enriching the seaport towns and paid regularly their tribute of wine to the Ardri ; the Boru tribute was revived—a fatal mistake—and was paid by Leinster ; the other chiefs paid their various contributions ; and at Kincora Brian dispensed a hospitality not unworthy of a great king. In his palace the songs of triumph were once more heard, the valour of the Dalcassians was extolled, and sometimes the old monarch himself took his harp and played for the assembled guests.[5] For nearly ten years Ireland enjoyed a period of

[1] These three principalities would be represented by the present counties of Antrim and Down.

[2] *Gael and Gall*, p. 137.

[3] *Ibid.* p. 141.

[4] *Ibid.* p. 139 ; Introd. p. 159.

[5] The harp in Trinity College, commonly called Brian's harp, is not as old as the time of Brian (O'Curry's *Manners and Customs*, vol. iii. p. 269).

almost unbroken peace.[1] Once there was unrest among the northern clans (1010), and again in Ossory; but Murrogh, the Ardri's son, suppressed these disturbances, and the personal intervention of Brian was not called for until the Danes and Leinster united against him, and he was compelled to make the greatest effort of his life, as it was also destined to be his last.

The imposition of the hated cow tribute[2] was galling to the Leinstermen, who submitted only through fear. The restraints of a strong government were equally galling to the Danes. Sharing the common misfortune of subjection, both Danes and Leinstermen entertained the common hope of deliverance; they watched for a favourable moment to strike; the embers of discontent smouldered, and a spark only was required to kindle them into flame. As part of his tribute the Leinster king was bringing to Kincora (1013) three pine trees for ships' masts, and amongst the carriers some dispute arose as to who was to be in the first place. To end the dispute the king himself took the first place, and in his exertions in carrying the tree one of the silver buttons of his tunic had been torn off.[3] At Kincora he handed the tunic to his sister Gormfhlaeth,[4] asking her to sew on the displaced button; but the lady, instead, heaped reproaches on him for being a mere vassal, and angrily flung the tunic into the fire. The position she occupied in Brian's palace is not easily explained. She had married in succession Olaf Cuaran of Dublin and Malachy, the late Ardri. By each she had been repudiated, and finally she married Brian.[5] By Olaf she was the mother of Sitric, the Danish King of Dublin; by Malachy also she had a son,

[1] This is MacLiag's account, but Todd has justly remarked that the *Annals* for the period do not bear him out (Introd. p. 159, note).

[2] The date at which Brian reimposed it is uncertain; perhaps after becoming Ardri.

[3] *Gael and Gall*, p. 143. The tunic with the silver buttons was a gift from Brian, and was the token of Maelmorra's vassalage.

[4] She was the daughter of Murrogh, son of Finn, King of Leinster (*Four Masters*, at the year 1030, the year Gormfhlaeth died).

[5] Halliday's conjecture that she first married Brian, and that, divorced by him, she married Olaf, is ridiculous (*Scandinavian Kingdom of Dublin*, p. 78, note).

but she was not the mother of any of Brian's children.[1] Nor can she have been his wife if she was also Malachy's wife, for they were all Christians, and the bond of Christian marriage is the same for a king as for a subject. Kings have rarely been slow to break through moral restraints, and it seems likely that her connexion with Brian was one of those irregular and illicit connexions which have often disgraced a throne. Nor was Gormfhlaeth's character inconsistent with this assumption. In the words of the Saga, in all physical and natural endowments "she was the fairest of women," but in her moral conduct "she did all things ill." Her taunting words irritated Maelmorra, and his irritation was soon shown. Looking on at a game of chess which was being played between Murrogh and his cousin Conaing, Maelmorra suggested a move, which ended in Murrogh losing the game. Murrogh angrily remarked, "That was like the advice you gave the Danes which lost them Glenmama." Maelmorra with equal anger replied, "I will now give them advice and they shall not be defeated." "Then," said Murrogh, "you had better remind them to have a yew tree ready for your reception."[2] In bitterness of heart and in secret Maelmorra left Kincora the following morning. Brian despatched a messenger after him imploring him to return and that all necessary explanations and apologies would be given him; but the angry king would not be appeased—he even killed the messenger of peace, and hurried home to prepare for war.

Arrived at Leinster, Maelmorra recounted to his assembled clansmen the insults he had received. They decided to revolt, and were quickly joined by the Dublin Danes, by Flaherty O'Neill of Tirowen and by O'Rorke of Brefny. Those two latter chiefs suddenly invaded Meath and defeated Malachy, but in a second battle were defeated.[3] Retreating towards

[1] *Story of Burnt Njal*, vol. ii. p. 323. MacLiag says she was the mother of Donogh, son of Brian (p. 143).

[2] *Gael and Gall*, p. 145.

[3] *Four Masters*, at the year 1012; *Gael and Gall*, pp. 147-9. In one of these battles Domhnall, Malachy's grandson and heir, was killed.

Dublin, Malachy pursued them and ravaged the country as far as Howth; but he was met by the Leinstermen and Danes, defeated with the loss of 200 of his men, pursued to his own country, which was plundered to its centre and "captives and cattle innumerable carried off from the Termon of Fabhar."[1] Unable to make headway against so many enemies, Malachy appealed to Brian, who with his son Murrogh set out to his assistance. They overran Ossory and Leinster, taking many prisoners, and from Kilmainham laid siege to Dublin, but being unable to capture the city, they had to raise the siege and return home.[2]

The next few months were spent by both sides in preparing for the great struggle which all felt to be near. From Kincora the summons went forth and was readily answered by the clansmen of Thomond. From Loop Head to Limerick and Lough Derg, and across to Burren, Corcomroe and Corcobascin, washed by the waves of the Atlantic, the Dalcassians came, under their chiefs, the O'Briens, the O'Deas, the MacNamaras, the Macinerneys and the O'Quinns. Proud of their present pre-eminence and their past achievements, they remembered that theirs was the privilege to be first into the battle and last out of it; they had unbounded confidence in Brian, and were ready to follow even to death the lead of him who had so often led them to victory. From across the Shannon the fighting men of Ormond came.[3] The country of the Hy-Fidhgheinte, once disgraced by the treachery of Donovan, furnished their contingent; and time had so far softened ancient enmity, that Cian, son of Molloy, came with the forces of Desmond. The Deisi were under their chief, Mothla, and from Connaught were the Hy-Many under Tadhg (Teig) O'Kelly, and the Hy-Fiachrach under O'Heyne. The princes of Uladh and Tirowen remained in the north in unfriendly and gloomy neutrality, but the Meathmen were under the ever-faithful Malachy.[4] From the friendly Scots of Caledonia came a

[1] *Gael and Gall*, p. 149. [2] *Ibid.* p. 151.
[3] *Ibid.* p. 167; *Four Masters*, at the year 1013.
[4] *Gael and Gall*, p. 169.

contingent under Domhnall, Great Steward of Mar.[1] When all these forces were assembled there must have been not less than 20,000 marshalled under the command of the old warrior king.

In bringing together the Danes, nobody had been more active than Gormfhlaeth. Since Maelmorra's visit to Kincora, she had been repudiated by Brian and had become so "grim" against him that she wished him dead.[2] She had sent her son Sitric to the Danish leaders to beg their assistance, bidding him agree to any terms which they might demand. From Norway and Denmark, from the Orkney and Shetland Isles, from Northumbria and Man, from Skye and Lewis and Cantire and Cornwall, these Northmen came.[3] The two best known of their leaders were Brodir of Man and Sigurd, Earl of Orkneys. Both made it a condition to be acknowledged King of Ireland if Brian were defeated and slain, and also to get Gormfhlaeth in marriage, and to each Sitric secretly made the required promise.[4] The lady was now old[5] and had been already the wife or mistress of three kings in succession, by each of whom she had been repudiated, and it is unlikely that either Brodir[6] or Sigurd were attracted by her doubtful virtue, or coveted her faded charms. But both these chiefs were ambitious; they expected to found a kingdom in Ireland as their countryman, Sweyn, had in England; and for this design the aid of Gormfhlaeth, the mother of the King of Dublin, and sister of the King of Leinster, would be useful. By Palm Sunday (1014) the Danes and Leinstermen were assembled in Dublin, and the whole surface of Dublin Bay was covered with their ships. Their united forces were at least as large, perhaps larger, than those of Brian, and these daring Northmen were experienced in war; yet some doubts were mingled with their hopes of success in the coming fight. Even

[1] *Gael and Gall*, p. 175.
[2] *Burnt Njal*, vol. ii. p. 324.
[3] *Gael and Gall* (Introd. p. 168, note).
[4] *Burnt Njal*, vol. ii. pp. 327-8.
[5] She must have been, since her son Sitric had been King of Dublin since his father went to Iona in 980—thirty-four years before these events.
[6] Brodir had been a Christian, but had renounced Christianity (*Burnt Njal*, vol. ii. p. 329). Sitric also appealed to Brodir's brother Ospak, but he refused to fight "against so good a king" as Brian.

their stern natures were not inaccessible to superstition; their Skalds and prophets were held in the greatest reverence, and in certain wondrous events which lately happened they feared they read the signs of impending disaster. Brodir and his men had seen a shower of blood fall; a battle in the air had been witnessed between birds; swords and spears had been seen in the sky wielded by invisible hands;[1] in Iceland a priest, saying Mass, had his vestments stained with blood; and in Caithness twelve Valkyries had been seen in a bower, weaving out of men's entrails, with swords as shuttles, the grim woof of war.[2]

Boldly taking the offensive, Brian had already marched towards Dublin and plundered the district of Fingal from Dublin to Howth. This district was inhabited by Danes, and their friends in the city beheld with anger the ruin of their kinsmen's homes, and hastened their preparations for battle. They knew also that Brian had sent his son Donogh to Wicklow with a portion of his forces and that Donogh had not yet returned; and, moreover, a prophecy urged them not to delay, for Brodir, who was skilled in sorcery, had foretold[3] that if the battle were fought on Good Friday, Brian would fall, but if on any other day his foes would all fall, and so Good Friday was fixed upon. The city of Dublin was then altogether south of the Liffey,[4] and on the sloping plain, north and east by the Tolka and the sea, extending to Clontarf and beyond it, the whole Danish army encamped on Thursday evening. On the rising ground, near Phibsborough, was a wood called Tomar's Wood, and in front of this, and facing the Danes, the Irish army encamped. On the Danish side a renowned champion named Plat sent a challenge to single combat to the Irish camp, which was accepted by Domhnall, Great Steward of Mar; and as the two armies stood facing each other on Friday

[1] *Burnt Njal*, vol. ii. pp. 330-31.

[2] *Ibid.* pp. 337-43. Brian also got warning, for the family Banshee of the Dalcassians, Aoibheall (Eeval) of Craig Liath, appeared to him the night before the battle and revealed to him that he should be killed (*Gael and Gall*, p. 201).

[3] *Burnt Njal*, vol. ii. p. 333.

[4] Joyce's *Short History of Ireland*, p. 217.

KING BRIAN BORU AT CLONTARF

FROM A DRAWING BY PAUL HARDY

morning, the two champions met. Advancing from his own side, Plat shouted, "Where is Domhnall?" and Domhnall's answer came back, "Reptile, I am here." With the two armies as spectators the combat was fought, and both Plat and Domhnall soon fell, each mortally wounded.[1] The battle then became general. Each army was in three divisions. The Danish left wing on the Tolka, consisting of the Dublin Danes and a thousand Norwegians in coats of mail, was commanded by Amrud and Carlus, princes of Denmark; in the centre Maelmorra commanded the Leinstermen; while on the right the foreign Danes were under Brodir and Sigurd. Facing the Dublin Danes on the Irish right were the Dalcassians under Murrogh; in the centre were the Munstermen under Cian and Domhnall, Cohaing and Mothla; on the left were the Connaughtmen under O'Heyne and Tadhg O'Kelly.[2]

Before the battle began, Brian, mounted on a battle-charger and with a cross in his hand, rode in front and solemnly addressed the army, bade them remember all that the Danes had done, that in fighting them they fought for their country and their faith, that they were fighting on the day on which the Saviour of the world had died, and that He would be with them in the fight. Inspired by these words, they rushed upon the foe. It was Good Friday, the 23rd of April, at six o'clock in the morning, just as the tide was at its full. There was no cavalry in either army, nor can we discern any system of tactics according to which masses of men make or resist attack. The battle was rather a series of single combats in which personal prowess was the deciding element. Each clansman gathered round his own standard, and his chief, as he was

[1] *Gael and Gall*, pp. 175-7.

[2] *Ibid.* pp. 171-97; Joyce's *Short History*, pp. 218-25; *Four Masters*; *Annals of Loch Cé*; Lady Ferguson's *The Irish before the Conquest*, pp. 273-7. The arrangement of the various divisions has been taken from Lady Ferguson. It allows Murrogh to remain at the post of greatest danger, that is, near Dubh-gall's Bridge, where he was liable at any moment to be attacked by fresh troops from the city, and it leaves Sigurd on the right wing of his own side, in easy communication with his vessels in the Bay—a likely arrangement.

first in peace, was also first in danger and in valour, and among his foes sought out some chief whom he marked as his antagonist and his victim. It was a fiercely-contested fight. Morning passed into mid-day, mid-day to evening, the tide had ebbed and again was flowing, but the battle still raged. Standards had fallen, the ranks were fatally thinned, the ground was thickly covered with the dead and wounded, yet neither side would give way, and, even as the sun descended, both Celt and Dane still faced each other in that grim death-struggle. On the left, Tadhg O'Kelly and O'Heyne with many a gallant Connaughtman were dead, and the great Sigurd himself was among the slain. In the centre, Conaing and Maelmorra had slain each other, and numbers of brave Munstermen had fought their last fight. On the right the slaughter was great, for in no part of the battle had the contest been waged more fiercely. The dead lay in heaps, and on the blood-soddened earth the mail-clad Norwegian and the hardy veteran from the Fergus and the Shannon, after their fierce encounter, slept together peacefully in death. Towards evening Murrogh, whose battle-axe had brought down many a foeman, encountered in single combat the Norwegian prince Amrud,[1] and closing together both fell, Murrogh uppermost. With his sword he stabbed the foreigner, who, before he died, snatched a knife from Murrogh's belt, mortally wounding him. Amrud died in a few minutes, Murrogh lived till the following day. Though disheartened by the death of their chief, the Dalcassians still fought on, and at last the Danes on all sides gave way. It was then past six o'clock, the Danish ships were being carried out by the ebbing tide, and the Danes, unable to reach them, retreated by the shore and across the Tolka to the Liffey, then spanned by Dubh-gall's Bridge. Many perished in the sea, many in crossing the Tolka, but most of all between the Tolka and the Liffey, for at this point they encountered Malachy and his troops. Malachy had come to Clontarf to fight, but his magnanimity forsook him; he refused to aid Brian in reaping fresh glory,

[1] *Gael and Gall*, p. 195; Introd. p. 174. He is called son of Ebric, son of the King of Lochlan, and again son of the King of France.

and during the day, on a rising ground between the Tolka and the Liffey, he sullenly held aloof, an idle spectator of the combat. But the temptation to attack the retreating and hated Danes was too great to be resisted; he swooped down upon them and cut off their retreat by Dubh-gall's Bridge. His troops were fresh, while the Danes were wearied by twelve hours' incessant fighting. Their resistance was feeble; they were slaughtered in hundreds, and many who escaped the battle-axe or the sword were drowned in trying to cross the river.[1]

In his tent, a little in front of Tomar's Wood, Brian remained during the day and asked his attendants from time to time how the battle went. He was told that all was confusion, that there was a noise as if seven battalions were cutting down Tomar's Wood, but that Murrogh's standard still floated and that heads were falling wherever it was borne.[2] Brian was satisfied, declaring that while Murrogh's standard floated it would go well with the men of Erin. Again, towards the close of the day, he inquired, and was informed that it looked as if Tomar's Wood were on fire, the brushwood destroyed, a few stately trees only remaining—the soldiers had fallen, a few only of the chiefs were left, and Murrogh's standard was down. It was doleful news, for the old king had centred the hopes of his house in Murrogh, and when *he* was dead he protested he did not wish to survive. His wish was soon granted. His bodyguard had gone in pursuit of the flying Danes, and Brodir and a few followers hiding in the wood noted the unprotected tent, rushed in, and with a single stroke of his battle-axe clove in the king's skull.[3] "Now," he said, "let man tell man that Brodir killed Brian." The Dane was quickly surrounded and taken prisoner, and, according to the Norse Saga, his body was cut open and his entrails slowly wound out of him and thus he died.[4]

In that age it would be difficult to find a battle in which

[1] Joyce, pp. 220-22, note 3.
[2] *Gael and Gall*, pp. 197-201.
[3] *Ibid.* p. 203. Brodir at first passed him by, thinking he was a priest.
[4] *Burnt Njal*, vol. ii. p. 337.

the losses were so heavy in proportion to the numbers engaged. A moderate estimate places the loss on the Irish side at 4000, and on the Danish side at least 7000. Scarce any of the leaders were left, and it was this loss the Irish had most reason to bewail. Alone of all their kings, Brian had been able to crush the Danes and to repress the turbulence of the native chiefs. His death loosened the bonds that held these chiefs together; the death of Murrogh blighted the hope of a peaceful succession and of a strong central government; after Clontarf native unity and strength were over, and the reign of discord and chaos was about to begin.

CHAPTER X

A Long Period of Discord

WHEN Donogh O'Brien returned to Dublin, on Easter Sunday, the great battle was over, and, as he viewed the battlefield, thickly strewn with unburied corpses, and mingled with the survivors of the fight, he could estimate the losses and gains. Without doubt the invaders had been worsted, the dreams of Brodir and Sigurd to found a Danish kingdom in Ireland had come to nought, and of those foreigners whom love of plunder or glory had attracted from so many lands the greater number had fallen in the battle. So much the Irish had gained, but these gains were counterbalanced by losses which were irreparable. Brian, his son Murrogh, his grandson Turlogh,[1] his nephew Conaing—all had perished on that fatal field, and of the many sons that once were his, only Donogh and Tadhg (Teig) survived. So thinned were the Irish ranks, so exhausted the survivors, so numerous the wounded, that if again attacked by a strong force they must inevitably have suffered defeat. Nor were the Danes altogether crushed. The garrison of Dublin had suffered nothing, and the numbers in the city were largely increased by fugitives from the battle. Sitric[2] was so strong that Donogh felt unable to attack him; he was even emboldened to claim portion of the oxen which Donogh had taken as plunder from Wicklow, and threatened to attack him if his demands were not complied

[1] *Gael and Gall*, p. 193. He was son of Murrogh, and was but fifteen years of age. He was drowned at the Weir of Clontarf, *i.e.* in the Tolka, "with a foreigner in his right hand and a foreigner in his left hand, and a stake of the weir through him." Such is the language of MacLiag. It is easy to see that he was a poet.

[2] Sitric, with part of the troops, had no share in the battle, but watched it from the battlements of the city (*Gael and Gall*, p. 209).

with. But Donogh set his menaces at defiance and Sitric was awed into inactivity.[1] For several days the Irish were employed in burying their dead; the bodies of thirty chiefs were despatched to their own territories, there to receive a chieftain's funeral honours;[2] and the monks of Swords took charge of the bodies of Brian and Murrogh, and had them conveyed to Armagh. For twelve days, Offices and Masses were said for the souls of Brian and his son, and at length, in the Cathedral of Armagh, amid all the pomp and splendour of the Church's liturgy, the body of the greatest of the Irish kings was laid to rest.[3]

After Brian's death the flames of discord were soon kindled. On the return home from Clontarf, Cian of Desmond laid claim to the throne of Munster, contending that by the rule of alternate succession the Munster throne should now be filled by a prince of the race of Eoghan. Donogh denied these claims, protested that the rights of Desmond under the will of Oilioll Olum had been extinguished by the conquests of Brian, that the Dalcassians had acquired their right to the Munster throne by force, and by force they were ready to maintain it. The southern forces had then reached Mullaghmast, a fortified place, six miles from Athy, and Donogh, in expectation of attack, proposed to put the wounded within the shelter of the fort, an arrangement which the wounded refused to accept. They were determined to take their share in the coming battle, stuffed moss into their open wounds, and, like their unwounded comrades, were prepared to meet the enemy, sword in hand.[4] Cian relied for support on Domhnall, chief of the Ui Eochaidh,[5] and Domhnall was willing to assist him, but he would play no disinterested part. Like Cian, he was of the race of Eoghan; he was of a younger branch, but primogeniture had not been recognized; his father Dubhdabhoirenn had in fact been King of Munster, or at least King of Desmond, and he thought his right to that position was at least as strong as that of Cian. Yet he would join him

[1] *Gael and Gall*, p. 211. [2] *Ibid.* p. 213.
[3] Lanigan, vol. iii. p. 425. [4] *Gael and Gall*, p. 215.
[5] *Ibid.* pp. 248-9; Introd. p. 193—Genealogical Table, iv.

against the Dalcassians, but only on condition that whatever territory was conquered should be equally divided between them. To this Cian would not consent, the attack on Donogh O'Brien was abandoned, and before the year had expired Domhnall and Cian went to war, in which Cian was defeated and slain.[1] Donogh's troubles were not yet over. Passing by Athy, his wounded dressed their wounds and rested by the banks of the Barrow, and here another enemy awaited them—Donogh, son of Gillapatrick, Prince of Ossory, with his whole army drawn up in battle array. This prince remembered that his father had once been put in fetters by Brian Boru, and that his own territory of Ossory had been wasted and plundered by the same king the previous year, and to glut his vengeance he now determined to fall on Donogh O'Brien's attenuated ranks. He offered the alternative of submission or battle, and without hesitation Donogh O'Brien accepted battle. The wearied soldiers gallantly supported their chief, and the wounded displayed a heroism which has rarely been equalled. They insisted on fighting, directed that stakes should be cut in the neighbouring wood and driven in the earth, and that, as they were unable to stand, a wounded soldier should be tied to each stake, his arms in his hands, an unwounded soldier on each side of him, and thus would they meet the foe. Such heroes are rarely conquered. The Ossory men were awed at the sight, perhaps intimidated by such heroism; they desisted from the attack, and the Dalcassians were allowed to pursue their journey.[2] When they reached home, the loss in the battle and on the march had so decimated them that Donogh had less than one thousand men under his command.[3]

Without any formal election Malachy became Ardri. His hereditary rights could not be overlooked, his services against the Danes were remembered, and when Brian was gone there was nobody who could successfully compete with him for the

[1] *Annals of Ulster*, 1014; *Four Masters*, 1013.

[2] *Gael and Gall*, p. 217.

[3] *The Irish before the Conquest*, p. 281. Lady Ferguson gives the exact number as 850.

supreme honour. But this recognition by the native chiefs was only partial and incomplete; he was tolerated rather than recognized; and, among the sons of Brian especially, it was their impotence alone that restrained them from contesting his right by force. The submission of the northern princes—Tirowen, Tirconnell and Uladh—was more cordial, but even *they* felt little enthusiasm for one whom an ambitious rival had once dethroned. But whatever others thought, the Danes had good reason to feel that his vigour and energy were unimpaired, and that he was still as much to be feared as when he overwhelmed them at Glenmama and at Dubh-gall's Bridge. Joined by Flaherty O'Neill of Tirowen, he defeated the Dublin Danes (1015), destroyed the fortress of Dublin, and burned the greater part of the city. Two years later, he entered Leinster, wasted the district of Hy-Kinsella, again defeated the Danes, and compelled Leinster to pay tribute.[1] A short time before his death, he entered a lonely retreat—Cro-Innis, in Lough Ennell, near Mullingar, where he spent his last years in penance and mortification, and where he died (1022).[2] After Malachy's death supreme power passed for a time into the hands of two men, Corcran, an anchoret, and Conn O'Loughlin, Chief Poet,[3] and this order of things remained until Conn died (1024), or rather until he was killed,[4] for, like many other rulers, his end was brought about by violence. What was the nature and extent of the jurisdiction possessed by these two men is not clear; one of the annalists informs us that the country was governed "like a free state."[5] To make a poet and an anchoret rulers of a country was certainly an unusual arrangement, and perhaps not a wise one, but it shows that amid all the discord and war and violence that prevailed, respect for religion and sanctity still survived.

[1] *Annals of the Four Masters; Annals of Loch Cé.*

[2] *Ogygia*, part iii. chap. 93.

[3] O'Curry's *MS. Materials*, p. 9.

[4] On those who killed him God performed a "poet's miracle," for they died an evil death and their unburied corpses were devoured by birds and wolves (*Annals of Loch Cé*).

[5] *Annals of Clonmacnoise*, p. 173.

Since Clontarf the career of Donogh O'Brien had been a troubled one. His brother Tadhg was the elder brother, and the chiefs of Thomond, respecting the claims of age, for the most part sided with him. But Donogh had his own followers and was unwilling to be content with a subordinate position. Ultimately war broke out between the brothers, and for years this fratricidal struggle was prolonged. Tempted by the divisions between the sons of Brian, Domhnall of Desmond with a large force entered Thomond, designing to conquer that province. For the time Donogh and Tadhg suspended their quarrels and united against the invader. Domhnall was defeated and slain[1] (1015), and instead of Thomond being conquered by Desmond, Desmond itself was conquered by Thomond. When this was done, the quarrel between Tadhg and Donogh was renewed, and lasted until Tadhg's death (1023). In that year he was treacherously slain by O'Carroll of Ely O'Carroll, at the instigation of Donogh,[2] and then, his hands reddened with his brother's blood, Donogh became King of Munster. With a large force he swept through Meath, Bregia, Leinster and Ossory, taking hostages from each province (1026);[3] later on (1034)[4] he attacked and defeated Brefny; and when the forces of Leinster and Ossory combined in revolt against him (1050),[5] he defeated them. Finally (1060), he defeated the Connaughtmen, and compelled Rory O'Connor to give him hostages. In war he had almost reached the position once held by his father. Nor was he undistinguished in peace. He enacted salutary laws, sternly repressed robbery, caused the Sabbath to be observed; and when, in the famine of 1050, his Munster subjects in their distress seized on the property of the Church, he convoked a Synod of the prelates and lords of Munster and enacted laws "which speedily checked the wide-spreading sacrilege and averted the anger of God."[6] In his old age troubles fell thick upon him.

[1] *Annals of Ulster*. The battle was fought at Limerick.

[2] *Four Masters*.

[3] *Ibid.*; *Annals of Loch Cé*.

[4] *Four Masters*.

[5] *Ibid.* at 1049.

[6] *Cambrensis Eversus*, vol. ii. p. 41. The *Four Masters* says that "peace and good weather" was the consequence of this law.

His brother Tadhg had left a son Turlogh, who had been fostered at the court of Diarmuid Maelnambo, King of Leinster. Diarmuid was married to Donogh's daughter, but the ties of kindred were as nothing compared to the ties of affection between Diarmuid and his foster son. He watched over the boy with the greatest care, became the guardian of his interests and the champion of his claims, contending on his behalf that, as the son of Tadhg, he and not Donogh was the rightful heir to the Munster throne. Diarmuid sacked Waterford (1030), ravaged Ossory (1042), carried off captives and cattle from the Deisi (1048), laid Limerick and Iniscaltra in ashes (1058), and defeated Donogh himself (1061) at Sliabh Crut in Tipperary.[1] While Donogh was engaged defending himself against his powerful adversary, the King of Connaught entered Thomond, committed great depredations and laid the palace of Kincora in ruins.[2] These accumulated disasters weakened the power and broke the spirit of Donogh. He was now old, and feeling unable to contend against all his enemies, and perhaps anxious to atone for his crimes, he went on a pilgrimage to Rome, and died there (1064). He is said to have presented the crown and sceptre of Munster to the reigning Pope, and these were afterwards presented by Adrian IV. to Henry II. of England.[3]

Under the guardianship of Diarmuid Maelnambo, Turlogh O'Brien became King of Munster, and in these circumstances Diarmuid might be considered the most powerful among the Irish kings, and in fact is sometimes numbered among the Ardris.[4] He had already subdued the Deisi and Waterford, carried off captives from Meath, received homage from Connaught (1066), and scourged the Danes so much that "from Dublin to Allen was one scene of conflagration." But his

[1] Lynch's *Cambrensis Eversus*, vol. ii. p. 43.

[2] *Annals of Loch Cé*, at the year 1061.

[3] From this, supposing it true, it has been sometimes argued that the Pope acquired dominion over Ireland and was acting within his rights when he conferred it on Henry II.

[4] He is so numbered by Ware. *Cambrensis Eversus*, vol. ii. p. 45.

career of conquest was closed (1072), for in that year he was defeated and slain by O'Mellaghlin of Meath. At his death, without any opposition from any quarter, Turlogh O'Brien became supreme ruler of Leath Mhogha. This did not satisfy his ambition, and he proceeded to subdue Leath Chuin. Meath and Connaught gave him hostages, and with a large army, with Leinster, Meath, Connaught and the Dublin Danes, he marched north (1075), intending the subjugation of the northern province. The princes of the north encountered him at Ardee and utterly defeated him, so that he had to retire south, without hostages or prey, and "with a great slaughter and loss of his army."[1] This defeat does not seem to have seriously impaired his strength, for the following year (1076) he chastised Hy-Kinsella, where some restiveness was shown, he dethroned the reigning King of Dublin and put his own son Murtagh in his place, and deposed the King of Connaught, Rory O'Connor.[2] At a later date (1084), while he was occupied in Meath, the Connaught princes entered Thomond, "burned forts and churches and carried off great spoils,"[3] and in the same year a formidable revolt was organized by O'Rorke of Brefny, who was joined by other malcontent chieftains. Against these, Turlogh despatched an army under his son Murtagh, and, near Leixlip, O'Rorke and his allies were overthrown with the loss of four thousand men.[4] Murtagh captured O'Rorke, cut off his head, and had it posted up on the gates of Limerick.[5] When Turlogh died (1086) he was the foremost in power and influence among the Irish kings, in ability and energy, both in peace and war, not unworthy of the grandson of Brian. Abroad also his fame was great. By Lanfranc, Archbishop of Canterbury, who corresponded with him, he is styled the magnificent King of Ireland, and he

[1] *Four Masters*; *Annals of Loch Cé*; *Annals of Clonmacnoise*, at 1073.

[2] He (O'Connor) submitted to him at least.

[3] *Annals of Loch Cé.*

[4] *Four Masters.* The battle took place at Monecronock, near Leixlip.

[5] White's *History of Clare*, p. 86.

congratulates the people of Ireland that God had given them such a king.

Since the death of Malachy (1022) no prince of the race of Niall had been able to reach the position of Ardri. Malachy's son, Connor O'Mellaghlin,[1] was certainly not destitute of capacity, but his resources, as King of Meath, were small; against his most powerful rivals the O'Briens he could not always hold his own, and from necessity, rather than from disposition, he had to acknowledge the supremacy of his southern rival. Had the northern Hy-Nialls allied themselves with their kinsmen of Meath, they might have broken the power of the O'Briens, but no such alliance was formed. Flaherty O'Neill had helped Malachy after Clontarf in his wars against the Leinstermen and Danes, but apparently was unwilling to give the same help to his son, and there is no further instance except one for a century in which the princes of the northern and southern Hy-Nialls made common cause. Nor were the northern Hy-Nialls[2] themselves always able to agree; on the contrary, they were often the bitterest enemies. With a richer territory and greater resources, Tirowen from its central position was enabled to make frequent and successful attacks on the neighbouring states, and under a succession of able chiefs it maintained its ascendancy throughout Ulster. Upon Tirconnell and Uladh its attacks were frequent, and the injury inflicted often great. Tirowen ravaged Tirconnell (1028), carrying off great spoils, three years later; Uladh was overrun by the same power,[3] and

[1] Early in the eleventh century surnames came to be used—about the time of Brian Boru. Instead of saying Connor, son of Malachy, son of ——, it became Connor, descendant of Malachy or Maelseachlainn or O'Mellaghlin, a softened form of Maelseachlainn. The prefixes O and Mac equally signified descendant, and thus it happened that Brian's descendants became O'Brien; Niall's, O'Neill; Loughlin's, O'Loughlin or MacLoughlin; Connor's, O'Connor; Murrogh's, MacMurrogh.

[2] The northern Hy-Nialls were the princes of Tyrone and Tirconnell; the southern Hy-Nialls were those of Meath; all were descendants of Niall of the Nine Hostages, and inherited his dominions between them (*Gael and Gall*, Genealogical Tables, pp. 245-6).

[3] *Annals of Loch Cé.* Aedh O'Neill on that occasion carried off 1200 captives and 3000 cows.

the same year Tirconnell was invaded and its king slain. These events occurred while Flaherty O'Neill was on a pilgrimage to Rome, and while his son Aedh ruled. Both father and son died (1033), but neither the capacity nor inclination to make war upon others expired with these chiefs; and the Annals record that Tirowen attacked Tirconnell (1043).[1] Again, under Ardgar O'Loughlin, the ruling chief, Tirowen attacked Dalaraidh, and carried off 200 prisoners and a great spoil of cattle, and, extending the area of his depredations, Ardgar entered Connaught (1062) and carried off 6000 cows and 1000 prisoners.[2] After these acts of plunder and violence he retired to Armagh to do penance, and there he died (1064), and was buried in the mausoleum of the kings.[3] In alliance with the other northern princes, his successor, Aedh, was able to defeat Turlogh O'Brien at Ardee (1075), and a few years later (1080) Aedh's successor (Domhnall) defeated Fermanagh. This Domhnall determined to become Ardri, regarding Murtagh O'Brien, the ruling King of Munster, as a usurper, and the heir to the usurping Brian. But Murtagh was not easily subdued. He was equally ambitious and equally powerful as Domhnall, and between these two chiefs —both men of the highest capacity—a life-long struggle was waged, a struggle fierce, bitter and persistent, and which, at the close of their lives, was undecided still.

Domhnall ravaged Uladh (1084) and carried off great spoils, and four years later he defeated Rory O'Connor of Connaught, and compelled him to join him in an attack on Munster. With a large force they advanced south, and taking O'Brien unaware, they ravaged and plundered Thomond, destroyed Kincora, burned Limerick, and brought away into captivity many of the Munster chiefs.[4] O'Brien determined to retaliate, and in the following year (1089), in command of a large force, he sailed up the Shannon, plundering everything as he went along; but O'Connor blocked his boats on the

[1] *Four Masters*; *Loch Ce.* [2] *Loch Cé.* [3] *Ibid.*

[4] *Ibid.* The *Four Masters* gives the number of captive chiefs as 160.

river, O'Mellaghlin attacked him from Meath, and he had to hurriedly retrace his steps.[1] Chastened by defeat, O'Brien consented to meet in friendly conference Domhnall O'Loughlin, O'Mellaghlin, and O'Connor of Connaught, and all agreed to acknowledge Domhnall O'Loughlin as Ardri. But the submission of Murtagh was hollow and insincere, a subordinate position ill suited his aspiring talents; he merely wished to gain time, and on some pretext he entered Meath (1094) and killed its king, O'Mellaghlin; and passing on to Dublin, he defeated Godfrey, King of the Danes. Enraged at this attack on his ally of Meath, Domhnall O'Loughlin took up arms and advanced south against Murtagh; but the Archbishop of Armagh interfered (1097) and succeeded in making peace between them. Three times subsequently, when North and South were face to face, he again made peace, but he was not always successful, for both O'Loughlin and O'Brien were very determined and very difficult to restrain. Determined once and for all to crush his northern rival, Murtagh advanced up the Shannon (1100), and marched his army as far as Ballyshannon, while the Dublin Danes as his allies supported him from the sea; but the expedition did not achieve its purpose, and the Danish fleet "were cut off both by drowning and killing."[2] Undeterred by this failure, Murtagh still persevered, and with the tenacity of the O'Briens he resolved to make even a greater effort than he had yet done. Accompanied by the forces of Leinster, Meath and Connaught, he went north (1101), and O'Loughlin, unable to cope with such superior forces, retreated before him. Murtagh overran Tirconnell and Tirowen, and, in revenge for the destruction of Kincora, he demolished the royal palace of Aileach, directing his soldiers to carry away the stones of the palace to Limerick.[3] Advancing eastward, he received the submission of Uladh, and at last it seemed as if he could truthfully declare he was Ardri, and had reached the position once occupied by Brian Boru; for all Munster acknowledged his rule, Leinster, Meath and Connaught were fighting in his army and

[1] *Loch Cé.* [2] *Ibid.*

[3] *Four Masters.* They carried away the stones in their sacks.

under his command, Uladh had just given him hostages, and all that remained was Tirconnell and Tirowen. Yet O'Loughlin was unconquered still. Wisely declining a contest with O'Brien, he waited until he had gone southward and then attacked Uladh (1103). Murtagh advanced to the relief of his ally, and, unwisely dividing his forces, he left one division near Armagh, while he himself, taking the remainder, attacked and plundered Dalaraidh. Domhnall seized the opportunity given him, fell on the army encamped at Armagh, and completely routed them, with the loss of many of their chiefs, taking besides great spoils, including the royal pavilion and standard. This was the last occasion on which these two chieftains fought, for on subsequent occasions,[1] when they were preparing for battle, the Archbishop of Armagh[2] made peace between them.

Though occupied for the most part in fighting each other, both these kings had other troubles also on hand. Domhnall attacked Connaught (1110),[3] and plundered Fingal (1112). As to Murtagh, he was urgently called to Dublin (1102), where Magnus, King of Norway, had landed with a large invading force—perhaps he expected to succeed where Brodir and Sigurd had failed. With O'Loughlin still unsubdued, Murtagh did not wish to have an additional enemy in Magnus, and when he came to Dublin a conference was arranged between them, and instead of fighting there was feasting, instead of war there was a wedding. A son of Magnus was married to a daughter of Murtagh, and the two kings became friends.[4] Magnus left Dublin, but the next year he landed at Uladh, where he was defeated and slain. Nor was Murtagh, though he often plundered churches, ungenerous to the Church in his own province. The *Four Masters* records (1101) that he made a grant to a religious order of the royal palace of Cashel,

[1] *Loch Cé*, at the years 1107-9-13.

[2] This was Celsus, the friend of St. Malachy.

[3] *Loch Cé.* He carried off a thousand prisoners and several thousands of cattle.

[4] *Four Masters.*

"without any claim of laymen or clergymen on it"—a grant such as no king had ever made before.[1]

Towards the close of their lives, both Murtagh and his opponent retired to monasteries. Murtagh entered the monastery of Lismore, and died there (1119), being buried at Killaloe; Domhnall O'Loughlin entered the monastery of Derry, where he died (1121), "the most distinguished of the Irish for personal form, family, sense, prowess, prosperity, and happiness, for bestowing of jewels and food upon the mighty and the needy."[2]

While the greater chiefs were constantly engaged in war, so also were the minor chiefs. The same year that Flaherty O'Neill of Tirowen died (1033), it is on record that the O'Mellaghlins of Meath quarrelled and even went to war, in which Murtagh O'Mellaghlin was victorious over his kinsman Connor O'Mellaghlin, and in which several chiefs were slain; the Ely and the Hy-Fiachrach Aidhne were at war, and so also were the Hy-Fiachrach of Ardstraw and Fermanagh. Flann, son of Domhnall O'Mellaghlin, was blinded by his brother Connor (1037), a similar fate befell the King of Leinster's son, at the hands of Magillapatrick of Ossory, and the Tanist of Hy-Kinsella was blinded by the son of Maelnambo.[3] At the year 1041 the annalist declares that the events of the year between "slaying and plunderings and battles" are so numerous that he could not undertake to relate them all.[4] At 1051 the King of the Deisi was blinded by the O'Faelan, the son of Cathal O'Connor of West Connaught was blinded by Aedh O'Connor, and MacLoughlin was expelled from the chieftainship of Tullahoge and Aedh put in his place.[5] That same year, Aedh was slain by the men of Fermanagh (1054), and the clan of Ui Meath[6] was defeated by the Ui Eochaidh.[7] Rory

[1] *Four Masters.*

[2] Such is the panegyric of the *Annals of Ulster*, in which their partiality for the *Northern* prince can be detected.

[3] This barbarous and cruel torture was of frequent occurrence among these Irish chiefs. [4] *Annals of Loch Cé.* [5] *Ibid.*; *Four Masters.*

[6] Partly in Louth and partly in Monaghan. Hy-Meath Tire or Inland Meath (*Book of Rights*, pp. 148-9, note). [7] An Armagh clan.

O'Flaherty of Iar-Connaught was slain by Aedh O'Connor (1062), and Rory of Fermanagh killed by O'Rorke of Brefny. O'Kelly of Hy-Many was slain by Aedh O'Connor (1065), and Aedh himself killed in battle (1067) by Art O'Rorke of Brefny.[1] But it is useless to multiply instances; the list might be indefinitely prolonged. Year after year, every clan and every sept was at war with its neighbour; from Innishowen to Desmond, from Iar-Connaught to Athcliath, there was the same monotonous iteration of war and plunder; and disorder and discord were supreme. Nor were the Danes idle, as might be expected. The overthrow at Clontarf and their subsequent defeats by Malachy had diminished their resources; no further aid came from beyond the sea, and they were unable in consequence to profit by the divisions and disorganization among the native chiefs. The Dublin Danes were Christian; their king, Sitric, had built and endowed a church at Dublin, and towards the close of his life had gone on a pilgrimage to Rome.[2] Yet at intervals these Danes either plundered themselves or allied themselves for purpose of plunder with some native chief. They invaded Meath (1027), but were defeated; they landed at Rathlin (1045) and killed 300 of the natives; and in alliance with Murtagh O'Brien they invaded Ulster. If to this be added that they occasionally sacked a monastery or church, we have exhausted the list of their achievements.

After the death of Domhnall O'Loughlin (1121) there was an interval of some years during which there was no Ardri. No prince of the Tirowen or Dalcassian race was strong enough to establish a supremacy over the whole island, nor indeed over his own province. It had become recognized that the rule of the stronger only should prevail, hereditary claims were ignored, and the example of Brian had pointed out to every ambitious adventurer that if he was sufficiently strong and sufficiently unscrupulous he might become supreme among the Irish kings. Just such an adventurer appeared in the person of Turlogh O'Connor. His ancestors had long been kings of

[1] *Four Masters*; *Loch Cé*. [2] Lanigan, vol. iii. pp. 432-4.

Connaught: it is the testimony of O'Donovan that no family in Ireland, or even in Europe, can trace its descent through so many generations of legitimate ancestors as these same O'Connors.[1] They were a warlike race, and in the long struggle between North and South for pre-eminence they had not been mere idle spectators. Turlogh's father, Rory, had been taken prisoner (1092)[2] by his turbulent vassal, O'Flaherty of Iar-Connaught, and, according to the barbarous practice of the times, had his eyes put out. Disqualified by his blindness from continuing king—and probably it was this O'Flaherty intended—Rory retired to the monastery of Clonmacnoise, where he died after twenty-six years spent there.[3] His son Domhnall became his successor, but for some reason he was deposed (1106) by Murtagh O'Brien, and his young brother, Turlogh, placed on the throne by the same king. Turlogh was then but eighteen years old, and from one so young the Munster king expected that little was to be feared, and that perhaps, on the contrary, he might become the ally, or even the vassal, of Munster. If he expected this he grievously erred, for Turlogh soon showed an independence of character which made it plain that among the Irish chiefs he was not disposed to play the rôle of vassal but of master. He co-operated with Murtagh O'Brien and Murrogh O'Mellaghlin (1109) in an attack on Brefny, and perhaps it was to punish him for thus being in alliance with the Munster king that Domhnall O'Loughlin entered Connaught (1110), laid waste much of the province, and carried away three thousand prisoners and many thousand cattle.[4] Moved by discontent, or ambition, a Connaught tribe, the Conmaicne, thought the time opportune for revolting against Turlogh, but at the battle of Ross (1110) Turlogh defeated them with the loss of many of their chiefs.[5] Next year he plundered Fermanagh, a

[1] The *O'Conors of Connaught*, by the O'Conor Don, p. 3.

[2] *Four Masters.*

[3] *Ibid.* It seems from the *Annals of Loch Cé* that he had taken Orders.

[4] *Four Masters.*

[5] The Conmaicne dwelt in the north of the county of Galway, *i.e.* the present barony of Dunmore, at least the branch of the tribe that fought Turlogh. Ross is near Rathcroghan in Roscommon, from which it seems

little later (1113) he was the ally of Murtagh O'Brien against O'Loughlin of Tirowen, but two years later (1115) he entered Thomond and plundered it as far as Limerick.[1]

Turlogh's prowess was soon recognized by all Connaught; the chastisement inflicted upon the Conmaicne had blighted the hopes of brooding revolt; and neither O'Kelly nor O'Flaherty, the two most powerful of the Connaught chiefs, even once during his long reign presumed to be numbered among his foes. But to be King of Connaught did not satisfy Turlogh's ambition, and, secure of the allegiance of his own province, he meditated conquests beyond the Shannon. His military resources were not large, but it was not by superior strength he always expected to succeed. To foster dissension in each province; to set up two or three kings instead of one, and to have at least one of these his own dependant and creature; to promote quarrels between chiefs and then to be the decisive arbiter of their quarrels; to ally himself with Brefny against Leinster, and with Brefny and Leinster against Munster,—these were the means he was ready to employ, and by these means he reached pre-eminence. He entered Meath (1115), interposed in a quarrel between the O'Mellaghlins, set up two kings instead of one, and got submission from both; and about the same time made an alliance with O'Rorke of Brefny, and then, joined by his allies of Meath and Brefny, he entered Munster and measured swords with the Dalcassians.[2]

The time was opportune for his designs. The once dreaded Murtagh O'Brien was a penitent at Lismore, and, among the monks of that famous monastery, he had ceased to think of wars and battles, and in feebleness and old age was concerned only about the interests of his soul. His brother Diarmuid, who had filled the throne since his abdication, had just died (1118), and some confusion might probably arise as to the succession to the vacant throne. Turlogh, joined by Murrogh O'Mellaghlin and O'Rorke of Brefny, entered Munster,

evident that the Conmaicne invaded Turlogh's hereditary territory (*Four Masters* and *Book of Rights*, p. 100).

[1] *Four Masters.* [2] *Ibid.*

wasted and plundered as far as Glanmire in Cork, and, reviving the old rule of alternate succession, cut Munster in two, giving Desmond to MacCarthy, who was the representative of Eoghan, and Thomond to Connor O'Brien.[1] On his way north he passed by Kincora, and wishing to humiliate the O'Briens, and to be revenged for all his family and province had suffered at their hands, he levelled the palace to the earth, and cast it, both wood and stone, into the Shannon. Before the year expired he had got submission from Leinster and Ossory and the Dublin Danes, and had reached a position of authority and influence never reached by a Connaught king. Almost every year for several successive years he marched with an army into Munster, sparing neither churches nor territory on his march, and it is especially recorded that with MacMurrogh, King of Leinster, and Magillapatrick of Ossory, and the Dublin Danes he passed down the Shannon with a great fleet, and that he and his allies remained for a time at Killaloe "consuming the provisions of Munster."[2] The next year he disagreed with his ally O'Mellaghlin, entered his territory, which he ravaged, and expelled him from Meath; and when Domhnall O'Loughlin of Tirowen came to O'Mellaghlin's aid he temporized, made peace with O'Loughlin, and for a time O'Mellaghlin was unmolested. But Turlogh O'Connor only waited for a better opportunity, and when Domhnall O'Loughlin was dead, he joined with O'Rorke of Brefny and entered Meath (1126), and instead of one king of Meath, he set up three.[3] Meantime he had built bridges over the Shannon — at Athlone and Shannon Harbour, and at Ballinasloe on the Suck — and in the manner of the ancient Ardris held the Fair of Tailteann (1120), thus indicating his title to the monarchy of all Ireland.[4] He marched to Dublin (1126) and installed his son Connor as King of Dublin and Leinster, then ravaged Ossory, defeated MacCarthy of Desmond and

[1] *Four Masters*; O'Flaherty's *Ogygia*, part iii. chap. 67. The MacCarthys, when surnames began to be used, were the principal of the Eoghanacht tribes in Munster.

[2] *Four Masters*, at the year 1119.

[3] *Ibid.*

[4] *Ibid.*; O'Donovan's Note.

burned his camp near Kilkenny, established for months his headquarters at Ormond, and laid waste the surrounding country.[1] Division had weakened the Munster forces, but though they were weakened they were not yet subdued, and these repeated depredations would have roused to action a less spirited race than the Dalcassians. O'Brien fitted up a fleet on the Shannon and fought (1127) a naval battle with O'Connor, in which, however, Munster was beaten, and henceforth Turlogh on the Shannon was unmolested and supreme.[2] As long as Desmond and Thomond continued to quarrel they were both plundered, for they were helpless at the mercy of a ruthless enemy; but at last (1132) they united in self-defence, marched into Connaught, killed Cathal, son of Cathal O'Connor, royal heir of Connaught, demolished the fortresses of Galway and Dunmore, and plundered a great part of the country.[3] Through the influence of the clergy, a conference was held in Westmeath, between the Connaught and Munster kings, peace was made, and Munster was allowed a period to recover from her many disasters. During all these years the Connaught king made but one attack (1130) on Ulster, when he attacked it from the sea and plundered Tory Island and the coast of Donegal. The next year, O'Loughlin and the Ulster forces entered Connaught; the Connaughtmen retreated, then detached a portion of their forces and attacked the rear of the Ulster army near the Curlew Mountains, and the invaders were defeated with heavy loss, and were glad to conclude peace.

War was so widespread in 1145 that the *Four Masters* laments that "Ireland was a trembling sod," but they might have written the same of almost any other year at that time. War was everywhere. In the north, every two clans fought, and scarce a year passed that a quarrel did not arise between Tirconnell and Tirowen. Neither the memory of their common ancestors nor considerations of personal interest were able to

[1] *Four Masters.*

[2] *Ibid.* Turlogh's fleet consisted of one hundred and ninety vessels.

[3] *Ibid.* at 1132; *Loch Cé*, 1133.

restrain them. In the south, no sooner did the Munster princes make peace with Turlogh O'Connor (1133) than they hastened to make war upon each other, and in 1135 "many of the men of Desmond fell by those of Thomond."[1] A little later (1137) Connor O'Brien and Diarmuid MacMurrogh, King of Leinster, captured Waterford and defeated MacCarthy, King of the Deisi, and Connor O'Brien did homage to MacMurrogh.[2] Connaught was at war with Meath and Brefny, and Connor O'Brien preyed upon Connaught (1142); his successor, Turlogh, acted similarly in the following year; O'Mellaghlin was at war with Brefny (1145) and with Fermanagh, while the Munstermen entered Connaught, carried off Tadhg O'Kelly of Hy-Many into captivity, and killed Rory O'Flaherty of Iar-Connaught. Five years later (1150) they again entered Connaught and demolished the stone castle of Galway.[3] The fickle and capricious character of an Irish chieftain's allegiance in those days is illustrated by the conduct of O'Rorke, who, in 1137, joined Meath against Connaught, then submitted to Turlogh O'Connor and attacked Meath (1138); two years later was the ally of Meath against Connaught, and again submitted to Turlogh, even joined him in dismembering Meath, of which he got a third share; and finally (1145), the *Four Masters* records that he again turned against Connaught.

During these latter years Turlogh O'Brien of Thomond had been gaining ground, and his attacks on Connaught especially were so frequent and vexatious, that Turlogh O'Connor determined to chastise him. In alliance with Meath and MacMurrogh, and at the invitation of Tadhg O'Brien of Desmond, he entered Munster (1152), and at Moanmore, near Emly, he met the forces of Turlogh O'Brien. That prince was returning from a plundering expedition in Desmond and had nine thousand men under his command. O'Connor's forces were superior but not braver; the Dalcassians fought with desperate energy—they were willing to die but not to

[1] *Four Masters.* The battle was fought in the present county of Tipperary.

[2] *Ibid.*

[3] *Ibid.*

yield, nor did they until they were almost exterminated. Turlogh's son and heir was killed, two of the O'Kennedys, eight of the O'Deas, nine of the O'Shanaghans, five of the O'Quinn's, five of the O'Gradys, twenty-four of the O'Hogans, four of the O'Hehirs, five of the Hearnes—all chiefs of the Dalcassians; besides these, 7000 lay dead or wounded on that disastrous field; and all that remained of Turlogh O'Brien's army was one shattered battalion. The defeated Turlogh was deprived of his throne and his place given to Tadhg O'Brien.[1]

Thomond and Desmond ruled by his creatures, Turlogh O'Connor might reasonably believe that his hold on Munster was secure, and little dreamt that he was about to endure the greatest humiliation of his life; yet so it happened. The deposed Turlogh O'Brien made his way to Tirowen and begged the assistance of Aedh O'Loughlin, its king; and the ambitious Northern was flattered at seeing the descendant and heir of Brian Boru a suppliant in his palace. He resolved to assist him, and to attack Turlogh O'Connor, who was then in Westmeath.[2] His movements were rapid and skilful; O'Connor was taken off his guard and was disastrously defeated, and was compelled to give hostages to O'Loughlin, who now claimed to be Ardri. Tadhg O'Brien was deposed and his eyes put out (1153), and Turlogh was restored to the throne of Desmond.[3] Turlogh O'Connor's submission to O'Loughlin was merely nominal, and the next year (1154), with a strong fleet, he attacked Tirowen from the sea. As the northern king had no fleet, or at least no adequate fleet, he brought Danish mercenaries from the Scotch and Manx coasts, and off the coast of Innishowen the battle was fought. The Connaught force was victorious, but their commander was killed; the Danish ships were captured. This was the last battle fought by Turlogh O'Connor.[4] He died (1156), and was buried, as he had

[1] *Four Masters.*

[2] He had just taken from Diarmuid MacMurrogh the faithless Dervorgille, wife of Tighernan O'Rorke.

[3] *Four Masters*; White's *History of Clare*, p. 102.

[4] *The O'Conors*, p. 43.

requested, beneath the high altar of St. Ciaran at Clonmacnoise. His death removed the foremost figure from the theatre of Irish affairs, one who for nearly fifty years had been concerned in all the great events that had happened, and in most of which his was the controlling influence. In his own province his loss was most keenly felt, for these Connaughtmen were proud of their king, who had raised them to such pre-eminence, and who from his palace at Rathcroghan had imposed his will on so many princes beyond the Shannon. In all his wars they readily supported him, for he usually led them to victory, and often returned from his wars laden with the spoils of Munster and Meath. Nor was he undistinguished in peace. He sternly punished injustice, not sparing even his own son; he was liberal to the monasteries, especially to Clonmacnoise; he set up a mint and coined money;[1] he built bridges over the Shannon; the Abbey of Cong, the picturesque ruins of which still stand on the Corrib, was built and endowed by him, and the stone cross of Tuam and the processional cross of Cong show that he encouraged Irish art. No king since Brian Boru had such influence or power. Sometimes he has been called Turlogh the Great, and if we remember the age in which he lived, and compare him with his contemporaries, we may allow that he has some title to the name.

At the death of Turlogh, Aedh O'Loughlin received the submission of all the Irish chiefs, except Roderick O'Connor, the new King of Connaught, who, instead of submitting, plundered Tirowen from the sea (1157) and Munster and Ossory from land,[2] but in Meath he was defeated by the Ardri (1159) and was compelled to submit. O'Loughlin then became undisputed Ardri, and unity of government at last appeared; but he soon showed that he was unworthy of his position, and by an act of treachery and cruelty he lost both his throne and his life. In one of the many expeditions with which he harassed Uladh, he had taken Dunleavy, its chief, prisoner (1165), and he had deposed him. On his release, Dunleavy made his way

[1] Healy's *Ancient Schools and Scholars*, p. 547.
[2] *Four Masters.*

to O'Carroll of Oriel, whom he knew to be the Ardri's special friend, and at O'Carroll's request Dunleavy was restored to his position. But he gave ample guarantees of future good behaviour, gave hostages, including his own daughter, and with mutual promises and oaths, to which O'Carroll was a party, peace was established between Uladh and Tirowen.[1] Yet, in defiance of these promises and oaths, the Ardri, in the following year, made an unprovoked attack on Uladh, wasted and ravaged the district, carried away Dunleavy prisoner, and cruelly put out his eyes. Enraged at this perfidy, O'Carroll hurriedly raised an army, fell with fury on the Ardri, and at Letterluin, in the present county of Armagh, O'Loughlin was defeated and slain;[2] and thus ingloriously perished the last Ardri of the race of Niall.

Disgusted with O'Loughlin's conduct, the native chiefs no longer looked to Tirowen for a leader, and, with singular unanimity, they agreed to give to Roderick O'Connor the hostages which he sought. Tirconnell, Brefny, Meath and the Dublin Danes submitted to him, and at Dublin, whither he had marched, Roderick was inaugurated king, "as honourably as any king of the Gael was ever inaugurated."[3] Ossory and Leinster and all Munster at once recognized him, and he was allowed without protest, and apparently with approval, to divide Tirowen between Niall O'Loughlin and Aedh O'Neill.[4] He convoked at Athboy (1167) a great council of princes and ecclesiastics, where many useful regulations for the government of the entire country were made, and the members of which separated—an unusual thing in those days—"without controversy or battle."[5] The following year (1168) he celebrated the Fair of Tailteann—the last time it was ever celebrated—with unusual magnificence, the horsemen present

[1] *Four Masters.* Besides his daughter, he gave him a son of every chieftain in his province.

[2] *Ibid.* [3] *Ibid.*

[4] He also divided Munster between O'Brien and Diarmuid MacCarthy.

[5] The whole of the gathering and assembly was 13,000 horsemen (*Four Masters*).

being so numerous that they extended nearly seven miles.[1] Weary of war, it seemed at last that the energies of the people were to be directed into peaceful channels, that the reign of discord was over, and the reign of unity and peace was about to dawn.

[1] *Four Masters.*

CHAPTER XI

Decay of Religion and Learning

THE three centuries which succeeded the life and labours of St. Patrick make up the most flourishing period in the history of the Ancient Irish Church. With marvellous rapidity that Church had passed from infancy to maturity, the little mustard seed had become a mighty tree under the shade of which dwelt the sons and daughters of the Scots—brehons, bards, princes, children against the wishes of their parents, slaves despising the menaces of their masters.[1] In the sixth century many great monasteries arose, where the best of the Irish fasted and prayed and learned and taught; the whole country seemed turned into a vast religious camp, and before the century closed, zeal for souls and enthusiasm in God's service had sent Columba to convert the Picts[2] and Columbanus to practise austerity and shed the light of his example under the shadow of the Vosges Mountains.[3] The celebrity of the Irish schools became so great that, in the two succeeding centuries, from the Saxons and Franks numbers of students came to study; and while on so many continental lands barbarism and ignorance held sway, Ireland deserved to be called—as she has been by a great English writer—the School of the West.[4] Nor was there any evidence at the close of the eighth century that the vigour of the Irish Church was impaired. Her schools flourished as in their palmiest days. There were so many

[1] *Tripartite Life of St. Patrick*, p. 369. This happened in St. Patrick's lifetime—that the slave became a Christian, while the master remained a pagan.

[2] Reeves' *Adamnan*, p. 73.

[3] *Monks of the West*, book viii.

[4] Boswell's *Johnson*, chap. 32.

Saxon students at Armagh that one-third of the city was called the Trian Saxon or Saxon Third,[1] and the *Four Masters* records the death, during the eighth century, of many of her famous scholars. Dungal, whose knowledge of theology and Sacred Scripture was so remarkable, and who, against Claudius and the Western Iconoclasts, was the greatest champion of orthodoxy, had but recently left the School of Bangor;[2] and if we wish to know in what estimation Clonmacnoise was held, even at the Court of Charlemagne, we have but to read the letter of Alcuin to Colgu, one of the professors at Clonmacnoise.[3] The Paschal controversy was long since over, for the obstinacy of the northern monks had at last yielded to the persuasive eloquence of Adamnan,[4] and if the Pelagian heresy had ever flourished in Ireland, or was being revived in the seventh century, as Pope Honorius seems to have feared,[5] there is no mention of it in the native Annals, nor in the complaints made from time to time against Irishmen abroad. Nor is it likely that orthodoxy would have sought for a champion—as it did in the case of Dungal—amongst men who came from a church tainted and vitiated by heresy. The Irish Church, it was apparent, had attained to age without losing the freshness or vigour or energy of youth, and all the indications were that she was entering on a career of renewed prosperity, and that the glory of her future would not be overshadowed even by the glory of her past. Yet so fallible is human foresight that she was just about to enter on a period of decay, when her very life was to be imperilled, for the tempest of Danish invasion, which had swept with fury over so many lands, just burst on the coasts of Ireland.

A Danish writer, with a laudable desire to defend the memory of his ancestors, has endeavoured to show that the Danes were not so bad as they are represented to have been, and that, as to their ferocity and fanaticism, the verdict of

[1] Healy, p. 119.
[2] *Ibid.* p. 390; Lanigan, chap. 20.
[3] Usher's *Sylloge*.
[4] Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*, book v. chap. 15.
[5] Usher's *Sylloge*.

history has been too severe. He indignantly denies that they carried away and destroyed so many manuscripts, which would be quite useless for them, written in a language they did not understand.[1] They promoted trade and coined money,[2] and in these respects especially were above, rather than below, the Irish in civilization. Ledwich, an Irishman, goes further still. He states it as certain, "from every evidence supplied from antiquity," that Ireland, when the Danes came, had no stone buildings,[3] and that the well-known Round Towers were the work of Danish hands—"the Ostmen began them and they were imitated by the Irish."[4] This latter assertion—that the Danes built the Round Towers—might be admitted, if the distinction is remembered between an efficient and an occasional cause: these towers were built by the Irish because of Danish depredations and to serve as a refuge against their attacks. Ledwich was a learned man, but his veracity was not equal to his learning, his prejudices against the Ancient Irish were strong, and neither his bold assertions nor Worsae's zealous advocacy can avail on behalf of the Danes. The judgment of history has too many facts in its support, and that judgment is, that the Danes built up nothing and knew only how to destroy. It is well known that wherever they landed, robbery and murder followed, and that their raven banner was the symbol of desolation and ruin. Nor were they less ferocious in Ireland than elsewhere, and in Ireland, as in other countries, their fury was directed most against Christian churches and monasteries, and for the extirpation of Christianity itself. Of their various attacks on the several monasteries the records are necessarily incomplete, for in that age of turmoil the machinery of scholarship was disorganized. Yet in the native Annals, incomplete though they be, we find that Armagh was plundered six times in the ninth century and three times in the tenth,[5] and that

[1] Worsae, *The Danes and Norwegians in England, Scotland and Ireland*, p. 301.

[2] *Ibid.* p. 334.

[3] *Antiquities*, pp. 141-3.

[4] Ledwich's *Antiquities*, p. 288; Petrie's *Round Towers*, p. 9.

[5] *Four Masters*, at the years 830-39-43-50-67-91, 920-34-51, etc. etc.

during the same period Clonmacnoise was plundered four times, Glendalough twice, Bangor, Clonard, Kells and Clooneenagh once each, and Kildare five times. What took place at Bangor and Armagh will illustrate the injury done, for these are types of the ruin effected elsewhere. In Bangor (824) the monastery was plundered, the oratory broken into, and the relics of St. Comgal, the founder, shaken from the shrine in which they were placed, and the shrine itself carried away. Armagh was plundered (832) three times in one month; a few years later (839) its oratory and cathedral were burned; it was again plundered and burned (867), with its oratories—all its property and wealth that could be utilized was carried away, and one thousand persons were either killed by the sword or driven into the burning buildings, where they were suffocated; later still (890) it was again plundered, seven hundred of its inhabitants were taken into captivity, and its church and oratory were destroyed.

The monastic character of the Ancient Irish Church has been often noted.[1] It was in the monasteries and by them the whole work of education was carried on; for the bardic schools were the only other schools, and they were not in the ninth and tenth centuries of much account, and had never been an unmixed blessing.[2] In the monasteries the monk toiled and prayed; there were the churches, there lived the priests who ministered to the people outside, and there also was the bishop, whose episcopate was not yet diocesan, and whose jurisdiction was limited to the monastery and its immediate surroundings. When these monasteries were violently invaded, their schools destroyed, their books torn or drowned, their scholars and teachers gone, their altars overthrown or desecrated, their chalices turned into pagan drinking-cups, their priests murdered, or at least dispersed, and hiding in woods and caves, the work of conserving and propagating the Christian religion became well-nigh impossible, and the danger seemed not remote that the light of the Gospel, which had burned so brilliantly and so

[1] *Cambrensis Eversus*, vol. iii. p. 463; *Monks of the West*, book viii. chap. 3.

[2] Douglas Hyde, *Literary History of Ireland*, p. 488.

long, was about to be finally extinguished. The material damage done to the churches was in many cases repaired, and it is difficult to know which to marvel at most—the grim persistence with which the Danes attacked the monasteries, or the equally remarkable persistence with which the Irish repaired them. But mere material damage was not the greatest injury done to the Irish Church. In the corruption of manners, the neglect of religion, and the general demoralization of the people, her wounds were deeper still. The whole energies of the people were turned to war, the fatal clan system, so fruitful of discord, still flourished, and the weapons which should have been turned against the invader were as often turned against each other. The quietness and the seclusion of monastic life soon lost their attractions for a warlike race; amid strife and bloodshed neither sanctity nor religion could flourish; even monks, forgetting that their vocation was one of peace, mingled in the fray, and not alone fought the invader, but even fought each other.[1] Reverence for monasteries and their inhabitants declined; and not once but often did a native and Christian chief plunder and rob as ruthlessly as the pagan Dane. During the ninth and tenth centuries, Clonmacnoise[2] was sacked and plundered by native chiefs no less than eight times; Armagh, Glendalough, Clooneenagh and Kildare once each; and the Annals record, at the year 848, that a native chief (Cinaedh, son of Conaing of Cianachta-Breagh) burned the oratory of Treoit, with two hundred and sixty persons who had sought shelter within its sacred walls.

St. Patrick has spoken with enthusiasm of the generosity of the Irish of his own time, how they came and cast upon the altar even their personal ornaments, though his love of poverty precluded him from accepting all their gifts.[3] In succeeding ages the same generous spirit survived. Each chief felt proud to have a monastery on his territory, which he generously

[1] Reeves' *Adamnan*, p. 255. *The Four Masters* has suppressed these facts.

[2] *Four Masters*, at the years 831-2-4-44, 934-51-60.

[3] *Tripartite Life*, p. 367.

endowed with land. The chief of Ely O'Carroll, for instance, gave his own residence for a monastery,[1] Turlogh of Thomond richly endowed Killaloe,[2] and such examples were not rare. Up to the coming of the Danes these monastic possessions had been respected, and, except in rare and isolated cases, had not excited the aggressive cupidity of the native chiefs. But the havoc wrought by foreign invasion and domestic strife weakened the influence of religion, and the Church lands came to be regarded by many of the chiefs with a hungry eye. While they had a member of their own family in Holy Orders, who could act as abbot, they were content to let the monastery alone,[3] but when the clerical vocation had not been vouchsafed to one of their kindred, under the specious plea of guarding the monastery against the Danes, they boldly took possession of its lands, and even assumed the name and exercised the authority of abbot. During the ninth century there was a lay abbot at Ross.[4] In many other monasteries the same system prevailed, and at Armagh, from the early part of the tenth century, there was for two centuries a succession of lay and married abbots, who presumed to act in the name of St. Patrick and with the authority of the primatial See.[5]

Such abuses as these indicate that the Irish Church had fallen on evil days. Yet her monasteries and schools struggled on, and with some measure of success. Suibhne, who died (892) and was buried at Clonmacnoise, presumably one of its students or professors, is described by Florence of Worcester as the "wisest and greatest doctor of the Scots."[6] Dicuil the Geographer, as he is called, who lived in the same century, another scholar of Clonmacnoise, wrote an interesting and learned work on Geography (*De Mensura Orbis Terrae*);[7]

[1] Lanigan, vol. iii. p. 24.

[2] Harris's *Ware*, vol. i. p. 590. His son, St. Flannan, was its first bishop.

[3] O'Hanlon, *Life of St. Malachy O'Morgair*, chap. 13.

[4] Healy, p. 493.

[5] *Cambrensis Eversus*, vol. iii. p. 404.

[6] Healy, p. 274. In Florence's *Chronicle* he is named Swifneh.

[7] Healy, p. 281.

Cormac, who was at the same time King and Bishop of Cashel, wrote a glossary, well known to Irish scholars as *Cormac's Glossary*, and showing that he knew besides Irish, Latin, Greek and Hebrew;[1] while Maelmura and Flann and O'Hartigan and O'Flynn wrote works in Irish, some of which still remain.[2] Maelmura wrote a poem on the *Milesian Immigration*, published (1847) by the Irish Archaeological Society. Nine or ten of O'Hartigan's poems remain, and of O'Flynn there are fourteen pieces remaining, containing eighteen hundred lines, and dealing with the whole early and mythical history of Ireland.[3]

But if there are few illustrious names in the Irish schools at home, it was not so on the Continent, where the reputation of the Irish for sanctity and scholarship was still maintained. During this period the Irish went abroad in crowds,[4] some perhaps to indulge their curiosity, for the Irish had already acquired a reputation for rambling;[5] others because, in a country desolated by perpetual war, they could cultivate neither sanctity nor scholarship, and sought for both in more favoured lands. Of this latter class was Dungal, an Irish exile (Hibernicus Exul), as he describes himself.[6] Besides his labours against the Iconoclasts, he established a school at Pavia, which soon became famous throughout Italy, and in the end of his life he retired to Bobbio, where he died (825). Donatus, scholar and poet, died Bishop of Fiesole (873).[7] Other Irishmen were Marcellus and Eusebius, monks in St. Gall; Helcis, Bishop of Angoulême; Columbanus, a monk, who wrote some verses for Charles the Bald; another Columbanus, a century later, was a monk at Ghent (died 959); Patrick, a monk at Glastonbury, which monastery was established by Irish monks, and in which

[1] Healy, p. 612; O'Curry's *MS. Materials*, pp. 19, 20.
[2] Healy, pp. 617-19.
[3] Hyde's *Literary History*, pp. 427-30.
[4] Olden, *The Church of Ireland*, pp. 172, 184.
[5] Lingard's *Anglo-Saxon Church*, vol. ii. p. 269, note.
[6] Lanigan, vol. iii. pp. 259-64.
[7] *Ibid.* vol. iii. pp. 282-3. On his tomb in the Cathedral verses written by himself were engraved; he calls himself "Scotorum Sanguine cretus."

the great St. Dunstan was trained; and Irish monasteries existed also both at Cologne and Metz.[1]

Among all the Irishmen abroad during this period, the best known was John Scotus Erigena. The time of his birth, the place in Ireland in which he was born, the school or schools in which he studied, the time and place and manner of his death are all equally uncertain. Among the scholars of the ninth century he stood high, among the philosophers he was first, and at Rome the variety and extent of his learning—"a barbarian from the ends of the earth"—was matter for the greatest wonder.[2] A resident at the Court of Charles the Bald, a familiar and favourite of that monarch, and head of the palace school, among the scholars around him so great was his learning that he soon came to be called the Master,[3] and when the controversy raised by Gottschalk on predestination arose, he undertook the refutation of Gottschalk's errors.[4] Unlike his countryman Dungal, he relied too much on reason and had no great reverence for authority, nor can it be denied that the language of his *Capitula*, in reference to predestination, free will, the effects of original sin, and eternal punishment, is at least ambiguous and difficult to acquit of error,[5] and gave plausible excuse for the attacks

[1] Lanigan, vol. iii. pp. 285-320, etc.

[2] Usher's *Sylloge*, No. 24. "Mirandum est quoque quomodo vir ille barbarus *qui in finibus mundi positus* talia intellectu capere in aliamque linguam transferre valuerit."

[3] Healy, p. 581; Lanigan, vol. iii. pp. 288 *et seq.*

[4] Gottschalk was a monk at Fulda, and had been *compelled* to enter a monastery. He taught that some were predestined to eternal life and others to eternal death, and therefore that God had ordained some men to be saved, and others to be lost—a direct contradiction of the words of Scripture, that God wishes all men to be saved (Alzog's *Church History*, vol. ii. p. 307).

[5] Usher's *Works*, vol. iv. pp. 114 *et seq.* His proposition that foreknowledge and predestination are the same cannot be admitted. God does foresee that some will be saved and others lost, but the former will be saved by co-operating with grace and the proper exercise of their liberty, the latter will be lost by misusing their liberty and failing to co-operate with grace. But this is not the same as to say that some are eternally predestined to be saved and others to be lost. If foreknowledge and predestination in both these cases be the same, it would be to disregard

of Florus and Prudentius.[1] Their acrid criticisms have been justly censured by Dr. Healy, and are less remarkable for Christian charity than for coarse and even brutal invective; for such terms as "vain and garrulous man," "so-called scholar and learned," "inventor of lies," and others of a like character, are simply abuse, utterly devoid of argument as well as of good taste, and repel rather than attract conviction. At two councils, Valence (855) and Langres (859), Scotus was condemned, but at the Synod of Tousi (860) that condemnation seems to have been revoked.[2] Scotus must have been able to explain what he wrote to the satisfaction of the assembled bishops, and perhaps he attached to his language a philosophic rather than a theologic[3] significance.

At the request of Charles the Bald, he translated from the Greek the works of Dionysius the Areopagite, which work also did not escape censure, though the language of Anastasius contrasts agreeably with that of Florus and Prudentius. He merely insinuates that the translation of Erigena was too literal, and ascribes it to the translator's humility—not presuming to depart from the very words of the original.[4] The third and last work of Erigena was not a translation but an original work, and was called *De Divisione Naturae.* In this he certainly erred: he was guilty of Pantheism, for throughout he identifies Nature with God. His death is assigned to the year 875. Mosheim's judgment on him was, that "he was a great and

merit and extinguish human liberty. Nor again can that proposition be admitted that, in eternal fire, there is no pain but the absence of felicity, *e.g.* the loss of God. This is one element of what is suffered, but only one, for the fire itself burns and causes torture. And that proposition of Erigena is hard to understand that in the sin of Adam, instead of all men being tainted by it, what happened was that each individual will was concerned and participated individually in that sin—it looks like a denial of original sin.

[1] Florus was a deacon at Lyons; Prudentius was Bishop of Troyes (Lanigan, vol. iii. p. 292).

[2] Healy, p. 583.

[3] He was not in Holy Orders, and never studied theology (Lanigan, vol. iii. p. 288).

[4] Usher's *Sylloge*, No. 24. Anastasius was Papal librarian at Rome.

excelling genius";[1] and Lanigan's, that "he was a good philosopher but a bad theologian"; and both judgments may be accepted as correct.

At the commencement of the eleventh century, after a long period of darkness, the clouds seemed to have rolled away and the prospect looked bright for Ireland and the Irish Church. At last unity of government was established, and one strong man —Brian Boru—governed the whole country. At Sulcoit and Scattery Island and Glenmama he had taught the Danes the bitterness of defeat, and the Danish colonies at Limerick, Waterford and Dublin were his obedient, even if unwilling, subjects. The native chiefs, no longer allowed to make war upon each other with the same recklessness as of old, stood in salutary awe of his power, and Brian, victorious over all his enemies, was desirous to repair the ravages of long-continued war. For the twelve years he was Ardri he did much for religion and learning. "He sent professors and masters to teach wisdom and knowledge; and to buy books beyond the sea and the great ocean; because their writings and their books in every church and in every sanctuary where they were, were burned and thrown into water by the plunderers, from the beginning to the end; and Brian himself gave the price of learning and the price of books to every one separately who went on this service." He built many churches, and of these there are specially enumerated the churches of Inniscaltra and Killaloe, and the bell-tower of Tomgraney.[2] With regard to the church of Killaloe, the opinion of Petrie—and his opinions are never given without having good reason in their favour—is that, judging from the architecture, the church was built at a much earlier period—probably in the seventh century; and as to Inniscaltra, it was merely restored by Brian, and the only part built in his day was the chancel arch.[3] Without adopting in full the panegyric of MacLiag, it may be admitted that Brian's efforts

[1] Mosheim's *Ecclesiastical History* (Murdock and Soames), vol. ii. pp. 180, 224-5.

[2] *Wars of the Gael and Gall*, pp. 139-41.

[3] Petrie's *Round Towers*, pp. 281-2.

were not in vain, and that a revival in religion and learning did take place during the years that he ruled as supreme king.

It was only a temporary stemming of the tide, and after Clontarf, where Brian and so many members of his family perished, the condition of Ireland, like the relapsing sinner, became even worse than before. Nor was there any stage of her history more disastrous for the Irish Church than that long period of discord and anarchy which followed Clontarf and lasted for one hundred and fifty years. O'Brien in Munster, O'Loughlin in Ulster, O'Connor in Connaught—each wished to be supreme; and if they could not be supreme themselves, they were determined that no one else should, and so from age to age this ruinous struggle was carried on. The lesser chiefs imitated the greater, and the result was universal war. As the influence of the clergy diminished, that of the bards increased, and it was seldom used for the interests of peace. A bard's attachment was to his clan; his view did not reach beyond its limits, his talents were for personal panegyric or rude invective;[1] he roused his chief to war—and this was seldom necessary—by recounting the warlike deeds of his ancestors; the peaceful he dubbed as cowards or sluggards, the warlike only deserving of praise; and to a people like the Irish, so much swayed by emotion, his appeals were irresistible. There must have been many who saw in slaughtered kinsmen and ruined homes the sad realities of war, and who sighed for a life of peace at home; but either the powerlessness to disobey a warlike chief, the fear of the bard's satire, or perhaps the vanity to receive his praises, were too much for them, and against their better judgment they were borne along by the rushing tide. To the Danes was left the business of commerce and its profits, and what was said of them in a later age was at least as true in the eleventh and twelfth centuries—that the Irish knew no industry but war.[2]

This long period of strife and turmoil was a time of bitter trial for the Church. In past centuries the plunder of churches and monasteries had been left, except in some few cases, to the

[1] Walker's *Historical Memoir of the Irish Bards*, pp. 30-141.
[2] Spenser's *View of the State of Ireland.*

Danes, but this unholy work was now done by native chiefs; and when O'Brien invaded Ulster, or O'Connor went to Thomond, the Annals record that they spared neither churches nor territory on their march.[1] Within the century after Clontarf, Clonmacnoise was plundered six times,[2] Armagh three times,[3] Kells and Ardbraecan twice, and Derry and Glendalough once each, nor does this exhaust the list of churches that suffered by native hands. The Danes were weak, except at Dublin and Waterford, and, moreover, had become Christians, and since 1040 a Danish bishop was at Dublin;[4] but though they had ceased to be pagans they had not ceased to be plunderers, and amongst other churches they pillaged Ardbraecan twice and Armagh once.[5]

Amid this wreck and ruin the monasteries still struggled on, some in a precarious condition, but others, such as Clonmacnoise, protected and endowed by Turlogh O'Connor; Lismore, patronized by the O'Briens of Thomond and the MacCarthys of Desmond; and Derry, where O'Loughlin of Tyrone died,—these in the twelfth century enjoyed a moderate degree of prosperity. The exodus of Irishmen to foreign lands still continued, and at Wurtzburg, Fulda and Ratisbon were monasteries almost, if not exclusively, Irish.[6] At Fulda lived and died (1002) Marianus Scotus,[7] who wrote a valuable chronicle in Latin; and at Ratisbon was another Marianus Scotus (died 1088), who wrote a learned Commentary on the Scriptures.[8] At home, also, there were some distinguished scholars, who wrote in Irish: Conn O'Loughlin, a poet (died 1024), "a very distinguished scholar," says O'Curry;[9] Flann, who wrote the *Synchronisms of Flann*, described as "the greatest scholar of his day,"[10] and of whose poetry two thousand

[1] *Annals of Loch Cé*, at 1101; *Four Masters*, 1121.
[2] *Four Masters*, 1023-44-50-60-95, 1129.
[3] *Ibid.* 1074-91, 1112, etc.
[4] Harris's *Ware*, vol. i.
[5] *Four Masters*, 1020.
[6] Lanigan, vol. iv. p. 6.
[7] *Ibid.* vol. iii. p. 447; Healy, p. 256.
[8] Lanigan, vol. iv. p. 4.
[9] *MS. Materials*, p. 9. It was this Conn who with Corcran, an anchorite, was entrusted with the government after Malachy's death (1022).
[10] Douglas Hyde's *Literary History*, p. 445. He was head teacher at Monasterboice, and died in 1056.

lines are to be found in the *Book of Leinster* alone; Tighernach, most accurate and reliable of all the Irish chroniclers; O'Malone (died 1123), who wrote the *Chronicon Scotorum*;[1] and last, though first in order of time, MacLiag (died 1016), who wrote the *Wars of the Gael and Gall*, a work inordinately and disagreeably verbose, full of bombast and exaggeration, but yet of enormous historic value. Lanigan states that foreign students still came to Ireland, though he can give but one solitary name.[2]

But an oasis cannot conceal, it rather accentuates, the nakedness of the surrounding desert, nor can the partial prosperity of a few schools conceal the ruin that had fallen upon the Irish Church. The constant plunder of churches by Christian chiefs, aided by Christian soldiers, showed that the worst passions of the human heart had been let loose and that religion had lost its power to control them. No synods were held for more than three centuries—from the first coming of the Danes to the Synod of Fiadh-mac-Aengussa (1115); the bishops, deprived of the revenues of the monastic lands, conferred Orders for money, and the Annals record (1055) that a pitched battle took place between the monks of Armagh and Kells, in which many lives were lost, and again (in 1060) there was a battle between two rival factions for the Abbacy of Armagh.[3] The salt had lost its savour; corruption, which perpetual war had engendered among the clergy, spread from the clergy to the people, and Lanfranc in his letters to Turlogh, King of Munster, and to the Danish King of Dublin, and again, Anselm to King Murtagh, were able to accuse the Irish, that bishops had been consecrated without Sees, that these bishops had been guilty of simony, that marriages had been contracted irregularly and within the prohibited degrees, and that the abominable practice existed of men abandoning their

[1] Healy, pp. 279 and 277.

[2] Vol. iii. p. 490. This student was Sulgenus, Bishop of St. David's.

[3] *Annals of Loch Cé. The Four Masters* has omitted these entries, wishing no doubt to suppress facts, showing how little these monks had the spirit of their state; but they ought to have remembered that they were writing history, and that it is the duty of the historian to tell the truth.

wives, even exchanging wives, with consequent promiscuous intercourse.[1] Lesser evils, but by no means light, were those mentioned by Gillebert, Bishop of Limerick, who, in his capacity of Papal Legate, sought to establish uniformity of discipline and practice, and wrote for the benefit of the clergy a tract, *De Usu Ecclesiastico*, and another, *De Statu Ecclesiae*. He dwells much on the diversity of Orders, Masses and Offices, sought to persuade all to conform to the Roman office, and characterizes as unbecoming and even schismatical, that a learned man in one Order would be an idiot and a layman in a church of a different Order.[2] Lanigan's remark is justified that Gillebert was but a shallow theologian,[3] for diversity of liturgy does not involve diversity of doctrine; there are still many Orders in the Church, and the offices of the regular differ from the secular clergy as well as among themselves, but such diversity does not amount to schism.

In the year 1132 Malachy O'Morgair—afterwards St. Malachy—became Archbishop of Armagh. Born in 1094, and educated at Armagh and Lismore, he became successively priest, vicar-general to Celsus, then Archbishop of Armagh, Abbot of Bangor, Bishop of Connor, and Archbishop of Armagh, besides subsequently being Bishop of Down and Papal Legate.[4] Twice he went to Rome, where he was received by Innocent II. with the greatest respect.[5] On these journeys he turned aside to Clairvaux, where he made the acquaintance and became the personal and attached friend of St. Bernard, in whose monastery and in whose arms he died (1148). St. Bernard wrote his Life, and it is in these pages that the picture of the Irish Church in the twelfth century is drawn in the most sombre colours. At Armagh, Malachy found that one powerful family had possessed

[1] Usher's *Sylloge*, Nos. 26, 27, and 35, 36.

[2] "Quid enim magis indecens aut *schismaticum* dici poterit quam doctissimum unius ordinis in alterius Ecclesia idiotam et laicum fieri?" (Usher's *Sylloge*, No. 30).

[3] Vol. iv. p. 29. [4] Lanigan, vol. iv. pp. 59 *et seq.*

[5] *Opera omnia S. Bernardi* (Ed. Mabillon), vol. i.; *De Vita S. Malachiae*, p. 1493. Innocent appointed him Legate in place of Gillebert, who was old and feeble.

that See for over two hundred years. Nine in succession—mostly laymen and married, though educated [1]—had presumed to take the Primate's place, to appropriate the revenues, and to have themselves recognized as Coarbs, or successors of St. Patrick. They did not, however, exercise episcopal functions,[2] but employed a regularly consecrated bishop, who discharged the duties of the episcopal office. Even after the appointment of Malachy as archbishop, one of these usurpers—Nigellus—took possession of the Bacal Jesu, or Crozier of St. Patrick, one of the insignia of the See of Armagh. It was said to have been given to St. Patrick by an angel,[3] it was carefully preserved and much venerated, and in St. Malachy's time was adorned with gold and precious stones. With this crozier Nigellus made his visitation throughout the various provinces, and the stupid people (*stultus et insipiens*) recognized the possessor of St. Patrick's crozier as his successor, and paid to a usurper the honours and dues which should have been reserved for St. Malachy. In other churches, and perhaps at Armagh, but subsidiary to the Coarb, there were other usurpers under the name of Herenachs.[4] Originally stewards of Church property, though not always ecclesiastics, their possession of the lands became hereditary in process of time, but they were subject to the bishop or abbot, and had out of the lands to pay him certain rents, and to be charged besides with the maintenance of the Church. Taking advantage of the disorders that prevailed, they continued to remember only their hereditary rights

[1] *De Vita S. Malachiae*, p. 1483. The eight before Celsus were all married men. Dr. Hanmer further states that Celsus himself was married, that he died of great age, "and lyeth buried with his wife and children in the said church," a bold statement and evidently an untrue one, for the *Annals of Ulster* (1105) expressly states that Celsus on becoming archbishop received Holy Orders on the feast of St. Adamnan (Sept. 23). He was of the family that had usurped Armagh, but St. Bernard in mentioning the eight *before* him plainly desires to exclude Celsus as being neither married nor without Orders. *Vide* Hanmer's Chronicle (*Ancient Irish Histories*, vol. ii. p. 203).

[2] Lanigan, vol. iv. p. 82.

[3] *Obits and Martyrology of Christ Church*, Introduction.

[4] O'Hanlon's *Life of S. Malachy*, chap. 13

to the lands, but their obligations they conveniently ignored; and we know that Armagh had been left in part without a roof for a hundred and thirty years,[1] that the monastery of Bangor had ceased to exist,[2] and that when St. Malachy, in his efforts to re-establish it, undertook the building of a stone church there, the herenach, presumably lest he might be called upon to fulfil his inherited obligations, incited the people to violence, telling them that they were Irish and not Gauls, and that a wooden church should be built as was done by their ancestors.[3] Neither at Connor nor Armagh were the offices chanted by the clergy; there was no preaching, no confession; marriages were irregularly contracted; faith was dead, and the people were Christians in name, but pagans in reality.[4] Thwarted in all his efforts at reform, Malachy lived for two years outside his episcopal city of Armagh, kept out forcibly by the lay usurpers, Maurice and Nigellus,[5] and when he entered the city, as a protection against violence, he was compelled to have an armed guard night and day.

It has been sometimes thought that St. Bernard's words are too strong, that the picture is overdrawn, and when the Irish are described as a barbarous people, a people without sanctity and without law, a rude people, a nation of beasts rather than men, such language falls harshly upon an Irish ear. His language in reference to marriage is especially strong, but is rather the result of misconception than of knowledge, for it was not that there were no marriages in Ireland, and therefore that concubinage was universal, but it was that in some cases, and perhaps in many cases, marriages had been contracted irregularly.[6] The time was long anterior to the Council of Trent, and in those days, instead of the prescribed form of words by which the contract and sacrament of marriage is now entered into, there existed a custom in accordance with which a mutual

[1] Lanigan, vol. iv. p. 77.
[2] *Ibid.* vol. iv. pp. 78 *et seq.*
[3] *De Vita S. Malachiae*, p. 1513.
[4] *Ibid.* p. 1480.
[5] *Ibid.* p. 1484.
[6] Lanigan, vol. iv. pp. 70, 71. This question is treated at some length by Dr. Lanigan, and with his usual ability and knowledge.

promise of marriage was made (*sponsalia de presenti*), followed immediately by cohabitation, and this was recognized as marriage. But the Irish custom was to make the mutual promise in reference to a future marriage (*sponsalia de futuro*). These promises were made solemnly, in presence of witnesses, to the knowledge of the Church, with some religious ceremonies and the interchange of gifts. They were made by those qualified to contract marriage; they were not annulled by a subsequent marriage, or by any other impediment having arisen, and continuing in all their original efficacy, when the time appointed had expired, cohabitation ensued, the spouses became husband and wife, betrothal passed into marriage—and such had been the declaration of two Popes, Alexander III. and Gregory II. Such a mode of contracting marriage was not usual in other countries, but it was thought sufficient in Ireland, and a contract having the sanction of religion, even though bound up with what was unusual and irregular, is entirely different from those illicit connexions which ignore religion altogether and are founded exclusively on the uncontrolled impulse of the passions. But the attempt to show that the other disorders spoken of did not exist, or that they should be confined to the north of Ireland, is vain. Almost the same indictment had been made against Dublin by Lanfranc and St. Anselm.[1] Nor is it probable that Connaught and Munster and Meath were any better, for these were the places which, for more than a century, had been the theatre of continued war. To the demoralizing influence of constant war may be added the evil example of the kings and chiefs. Muirchertach of the Leather Cloaks, for instance, was the son of Niall Glundubh and his step-sister Gormfhlaeth, for both husband and wife were children of the same mother—Maelmuire. Malachy, the rival of Brian Boru, was married firstly to a daughter of Olaf Cuaran,[2] and secondly to Gormfhlaeth, Olaf's discarded wife, while Brian Boru himself had the same Gormfhlaeth as his mistress. But the example of the Church, and above all of the

[1] Usher's *Sylloge*.

[2] Halliday's *Scandinavian Kingdom of Dublin*, pp. 77-79.

Church of Armagh, was the most pernicious in its effects. The whole Church of Ireland looked up to Armagh for guidance and good example, and how could the members of the body be sound when the head itself was stricken with disease?[1] In such a Church—helpless, almost hopeless—robbed of its ancient beauty and its vigour, it were hard to recognize the once prosperous Church of St. Columbanus and St. Columba. The Irish Church of their day might be likened to a splendid vessel, equal to the most arduous voyage, and fearing neither wind nor tide; in the twelfth century she had become a battered hulk, aimlessly drifting on the sea.

Many and serious as these evils were, yet they will not establish the contention of those who, from the days of Ware and Usher to our own, have sought to prove that the Irish was an independent Church and refused its allegiance to the Church of Rome. A modern Church historian, who is not deficient either in ability or knowledge, has a theory which is all his own. He does not deny that the ancient Irish held Rome in great veneration, but he gravely assures us that they venerated Rome, not as the head of their Church, but rather as the burial-place of Saints Peter and Paul.[2] Such a theory has the merit of novelty, but it can hardly be said to have the merit of truth. Ledwich[3] is never sparing either of assertion or speculation, and his speculations as to the Eastern origin of the Irish Church are as well founded as his positive assertion that there were differences of doctrine between the Irish and the Roman Church, for the only argument he brings forward in support of this view is that there were differences about the Paschal computation, a question which had no reference to doctrine at all. Usher's prejudices[4] were as strong as those of Ledwich, but his learning and candour and honesty as a historian were much greater, and yet he can find no better argument than this—that the Pope had no spiritual juris-

[1] *De Vita S. Malachiae*, p. 1483.

[2] Olden, *The Church of Ireland*, p. 96.

[3] *Antiquities*, pp. 411-12.

[4] Vol. iv. p. 319, *Of the Religion professed by the Ancient Irish. Vide* also Harris's *Ware*, vol. i. p. 30.

diction in Ireland because, up to the time of Gillebert, there had been no Papal Legate in Ireland; as if the presence of a Papal Legate were necessary to connect Ireland, in doctrine or even in discipline, with the Church of Rome. If this charge, or others of a like character, were true, it is remarkable that they were not made either by Lanfranc or Anselm or St. Bernard. Neither is it charged against any of the numerous Irishmen abroad,[1] not even against Scotus Erigena, against whom so many things have been said. If it were so, why should so many princes have gone as pilgrims to Rome—Sitric[2] (1040), Flaherty O'Neill (1030), Donogh O'Brien (1060)—why should they have paid honour to a Church they did not recognize? The journey to Rome in those days was no light matter, but one full of difficulty and danger; and Pope Innocent compassionates St. Malachy on having made it.[3] If princes and bishops did go to Rome, it could hardly be to gratify idle curiosity, but rather to pay their respects to him who was head of their Church and who sat in St. Peter's chair.

With unbounded admiration St. Bernard speaks of St. Malachy and his labours in the work of reform.[4] Even as Archbishop of Armagh he travelled on foot, suffering the extremes of cold and fatigue; like the Good Pastor, he was ready to lay down his life for his sheep. Knowing his danger but not fearing it, he stood in the midst of wolves; so little ambitious, that entreaty and almost force were necessary to make him accept the See of Armagh,[5] but only on condition that, if he could reform the people there, he would be allowed to resign, which he did, and was content with the small and obscure diocese of Down. Such exertions and such example as his could not but succeed, and both at Armagh and Connor the change he effected was great. The Roman customs in regard to the office were introduced, priests were ordained, churches built, confessions became frequent, the people came to the churches, irregular marriage and concubinage were

[1] Usher's *Sylloge*, No. 17.
[2] *Four Masters.*
[3] *De Vita S. Malachiae*, p. 1493.
[4] *Ibid.* p. 1489.
[5] *Ibid.* p. 1483.

replaced by lawful marriages, until at length it might be said "that which before was not my people now is my people."[1] As Papal Legate he travelled over all parts of the country, settled many disputes among warring chiefs, and at Cork settled a dispute about the succession to that See.[2] At his death (1148) the impress of his zeal was left on the whole Irish Church. Yet disorders of such long standing cannot be cured in the life, or by the labours, of a single man, and while much had been done, much remained yet to do.

So far back as the Synod of Rathbreasail (1118) an attempt was made to evolve order out of chaos in Church government, and for the first time diocesan episcopacy was established. The number of Sees was then fixed at twenty-four exclusive of Dublin, which was still left under the jurisdiction of Canterbury. Waterford and Lismore, which had hitherto been subject to the same jurisdiction, were made part of the Munster province and subject to the Archbishop of Cashel.[3] No palliums were yet conferred on any Irish prelate, but both Armagh and Cashel were recognized and decreed to be Archiepiscopal Sees, Armagh having a primacy over all Ireland, while over Leath Mhogha Cashel was supreme.[4] It was decreed that Church lands were to be respected and to be free from tribute, and while a blessing was pronounced on those who respected and observed the Synod's decrees, a curse was pronounced on those who should infringe them. Yet so little were these decrees respected that Turlogh O'Connor burned the churches of Cashel and Lismore (1121) and Emly (1123), and Conor O'Loughlin burned the church of Trim with a number of people assembled within it.[5] Other synods were held at Cashel (1134) and Innispatrick (1148)—at the latter of which it was agreed that Malachy should proceed to Rome and beg the palliums for Armagh and Cashel, which so far had not been obtained. St. Malachy had in the meantime

[1] *De Vita S. Malachiae*, p. 1481. [2] *Ibid.* p. 1503.

[3] Lanigan, vol. iv. pp. 42-43.

[4] This supremacy was one of honour and dignity rather than a conferring of jurisdiction over suffragan dioceses.

[5] Lanigan, vol. iv. p. 55.

introduced the Cistercian Order into Ireland, and had built for them a monastery at Mellifont (1142).[1] At the Synod of Kells (1152) Cardinal Paparo, who had been specially sent from Rome, conferred four palliums on the Archbishops of Armagh, Cashel, Dublin and Tuam; and so little was the number or boundaries of the dioceses fixed on at Rathbreasail adhered to that a new arrangement was made at Kells, and as many as thirty-eight dioceses were established.[2] Tithes were ordered to be paid in 1154, but they had not been paid up to the Synod of Cashel (1172), nor were the diocesan arrangements final, for at the Synod of Brigh-mac-Tadhg (1158) another diocese was added—that of Derry; a further synod was held (1162) at Clane. These numerous synods, in such rapid succession and in such marked contrast to the preceding ages, when no synods were held, indicate that the work of reform was being pushed on and that the bishops were earnest in their efforts; but it was easier to hold synods and make regulations than to put these regulations in force, nor could this be done while there were a number of turbulent chiefs for ever quarrelling with each other, making war a pastime, and apparently caring little for the people of whom they were at once the torment and the curse. At the Anglo-Norman invasion the clan system, having long outgrown its time, still existed, and, like the upas tree, neither Church nor State could flourish beneath its poisoned shade.

[1] Lanigan, vol. iv. p. 128. [2] *Ibid.* vol. iv. p. 167.

CHAPTER XII

Cultivation and Condition of the Arts

WHEN Giraldus Cambrensis came to Ireland, in the wake of the Anglo-Norman adventurers,[1] he found little to praise, and many things with which he found fault. The soil of the country, its climate, most of all its people—one and all excited his displeasure and drew from him words of censure. Ireland he describes as a country of uneven surface, mountainous, boggy, wet, woody and marshy, truly a desert land.[2] Surrounded on all sides by the sea, unsheltered, open to all the winds that blew, it was subject to violent and frequent storms, the blast either bending or uprooting the trees, and, like all mountainous countries, generating and nourishing most abundant rains. Among its animals the partridge and pheasant were wanting; there were no goats; and the violent winds and frequent rains caused multitudes of bees to perish; and those which combated successfully the inclemency of the weather were killed by the poisonous yew tree, with which the woods of Ireland abounded. But it is when Giraldus comes to speak of the inhabitants of the country that the violence and bitterness of his language is especially manifest. They were a rude people, a barbarous people, adulterous and incestuous, illegitimately born and married. They had not yet departed from the primitive habits of pastoral life, held agricultural labour in contempt, were averse to civil institutions, and led the same

[1] He came first in 1185 as Prince John's secretary. His real name was Gerald Barry or de Barri, but he is more frequently called by his Latin name as above—Cambrensis, to denote that he was a native of Cambria or Wales. He was born in Pembrokeshire. He wrote two works on Ireland, *The Topography* and *The Conquest of Ireland.*

[2] *Historical Works of Giraldus* (Bohn's Ed.), p. 20.

life their fathers did in the woods and open pastures, neither willing to abandon their old habits nor learn anything new.[1] They had no linen, no manufactures of woollens, no commerce, nor any sort of mechanical arts.[2] They were barbarous in their dress, in the manner of wearing their hair and beards; secluded by the position of their country from civilized nations, they learned nothing and practised nothing but the barbarism in which they were born and bred, and which stuck to them like a second nature.[3] They lived like the beasts, knew nothing of the very rudiments of the faith, and were the most filthy people, and the most ignorant, on the face of the earth.[4] In reference to such a people and such a country the question of Giraldus is not surprising—Can any good come from Ireland? As well expect to suck honey from the rock or draw oil from the flint.[5] It was evident that such a people were born into the world with a double dose of original sin, and the wonder is that the Fitzstephens and the Fitzgeralds and the De Burgos should care to live among such savages, or desire to be masters of a land where Nature had been so niggardly of her gifts.

The Arts which are cultivated and flourish among civilized nations could not be expected to be found, except in a rudimentary state, among a people so low in the scale of culture. And great is our surprise to learn—it is the testimony of Giraldus himself—that the Irish, described as so rude, yet excelled all other nations in music, an art which, even among the fine arts themselves, may justly be called the queen.[6] "The only thing," he says, "to which I find that this people apply a commendable industry is playing upon musical instruments, in which they are incomparably more skilful than any other nation I have ever seen. For their modulation on these instruments, unlike that of the Britons to which I am

[1] Giraldus Cambrensis, p. 124.

[2] Lynch's *Cambrensis Eversus*, vol. ii. pp. 167 *et seq.* Lynch, the author, conclusively proves that Giraldus is wrong, and even contradicts himself.

[3] Cambrensis, pp. 125-6.

[4] *Ibid.* pp. 134-5.

[5] *Ibid.* p. 6 (Author's First Preface to *The Topography*).

[6] *Ibid.* pp. 126-7 (*The Topography*, chap. 2).

accustomed, is not slow and harsh, but lively and rapid, while the harmony is both sweet and gay. It is astonishing that, in so complex and rapid a movement of the fingers, the musical proportions can be preserved, and that throughout the difficult modulations on their various instruments the harmony is completed with such a sweet velocity, so unequal an equality, so discordant a concord, as if the chords sounded together fourths or fifths. They always begin from B flat and return to the same, that the whole may be completed under the sweetness of a pleasing sound. They enter into a movement and conclude it in so delicate a manner, and play the little notes so sportively, under the blunter sounds of the base strings, enlivening with wanton levity or communicating a deeper internal sensation of pleasure, so that the perfection of their art appears in the concealment of it."

The influence of music is felt among all nations, and both savage and civilized man are at times under its potent spell. The wild war-dance of the savage appears grotesque enough, and to ears attuned to the higher forms of music there is little which is pleasing in the beating of their cymbals and their drums. But even the savage of the African swamp, as he beats his tamtam, does so with a certain rhythm and regularity, and amid the clamour and noise the ear recognizes a fixed order in the sounds ; time is beaten, though little of what we might call music is produced. Such rude beginnings are separated by an enormous interval of time and skill from the proficiency displayed by the Irish in the time of Giraldus. Nor could such proficiency be acquired suddenly, or in a single age, but must have been a slow and gradual development. At each stage the distinction can be easily marked between the laborious efforts of industry and patience and the sudden and subtle inspirations of genius ; but even genius cannot dispense with labour and patience, and such skill in music as the Irish had acquired was not, and could not be, the efforts of untutored genius. The fingers of the harpers[1] acquired their dexterity

[1] Giraldus has noted that the Irish only used two instruments—the harp and the tabor (p. 127).

by repeated efforts and by the rules and experience of the ages that had passed away; it was not in a day or in an age that their ears were so attuned to melody, or that they became possessed of that subtle faculty by which they so disciplined the various sounds of their harps that they felt and excited emotion, that they soothed the sorrowing by their strains, or called forth the tear of grief, or assuaged the violence of passion, or awakened to life and gaiety the feeble and almost vanished remembrance of some long-past scene.

Equally remarkable was the skill of the Irish in the art of illuminating manuscripts, but, unlike their proficiency in music, this had its origin in Christian times. The missionaries who accompanied and surrounded St. Patrick wanted books to carry on the work of their mission. The preacher wanted his copy of the Scriptures so as to teach the people who thronged to hear him, for the most trained memory could hardly retain everything in the Sacred Volume, and to rely on memory alone would be to invite error and confusion. The priest, or bishop, wanted his ritual to administer the Sacraments, and his missal to celebrate Mass, and as the country was being rapidly converted from paganism these books should be rapidly multiplied. In the monasteries which were founded, and to which schools were attached, not the least important part of the buildings was the Scriptorium or writing-house, where the monks who were skilled in penmanship were constantly employed in making copies of the required books. The number of monasteries which sprang up so rapidly was considerable, so also was the number of scribes[1] in each monastery, and the diligence and skill with which they worked was such that they were able to keep pace with the growing demand. But to copy these sacred books, and to copy them plainly and legibly, was not enough for these zealous men. The Scriptures were the inspired word of God, His wisdom conveyed to men through His appointed ministers. And if Solomon ransacked his own kingdom as well as others for materials and skill to

[1] Of all these there was none more expert than St. Columba.

decorate the Temple, was it not meet that something also should be done to decorate and ornament those works in which the wisdom of God was contained? Such at least was the view of those Irish monks, whose faith was so vivid, who considered it little what sacrifices they made in God's service and for the advancement of His honour, and who, to obtain merit in His sight and secure their own salvation, practised mortifications and austerities as intense and as difficult to human nature as did the monks of the Egyptian desert. The beginning of the art of illumination may have come to Ireland from the East, perhaps from Constantinople, where the Byzantine style flourished, or, it may be, from North Italy;[1] but whithersoever it was brought, the art in Ireland grew and flourished with peculiarities and an excellence all its own; and the Irish illuminated manuscripts are easily distinguished from those of all other lands. The skins from which the parchments were made were sometimes finely polished, but often also were rough and uneven. The writing was done not with sharp metallic pens, but with the quills of swans, geese and crows, and the inks used were of various colours—black, red, purple, violet, green and yellow, the permanency of the black and the brilliancy of the red being specially noticeable. The black was mixed with some gummy substance which did not sink into the parchment or fade; and the brilliancy of the red was not affected either by the heat of the sun or by the washing of the rain; defying both, it retained its original distinctive colour, and age but added to its beauty.[2] The various colours are blended with artistic effect, and the page glowing with these colours is strikingly beautiful. But perhaps it is the lines and figures which most effectually challenge admiration. The Irish scribe had a firm hand and a well-trained eye, and in the lines and curves which are so numerous there is no trace of a swerve, nothing to denote

[1] Miss Stokes, *Early Christian Art in Ireland*, p. 9. Interlaced designs certainly characterize the early Christian Art of North Italy (Stokes, p. 71).

[2] *Ibid.* pp. 8, 9.

but that these circles and lines had been drawn by the most accurate modern instruments of mathematics.[1] As we look at one of these illuminated pages, the variety of lines and curves, of spirals and interlacements, an animal in one place, the head of a fish in another, a human head in yet a third place, our curiosity is excited and baffled as to where the artist began and where he ended; figures, lines, circles, spirals and interlacements all are before us with such a completeness, an accuracy, a minuteness, lit up by a blaze of colours, blending so skilfully with those figures and with each other that even the trained artist is amazed at the skill displayed.

The most widely known and the most beautiful of these existing manuscripts is the *Book of Kells*. It is a copy of the Four Gospels, and is said by some to be the work of St. Columba, who is well known to have done much in copying, and who, by constant practice, attained considerable skill. But the evidence is overwhelming that the work is of a later date, perhaps of the eighth, or close of the seventh, century. The words are those of St. Jerome's version, which had not come into use in Ireland until after the sixth century, and the perfection of the work is such that it could hardly be reached so early as the sixth century. For such perfection would be reached only after the Church had conquered all its enemies and had settled down peacefully in its triumph, enabled to cultivate literature and art. Nor could St. Columba himself, active and zealous and hard-working missionary that he was, spare the time sufficient for such slow and painstaking work. His name has been associated with it—it was called the Gospel of Columcille[2]—because it was he who founded the monastery of Kells, and it was in that monastery that the manuscript was used. Its history, like the country to which it

[1] Westwood, author of *Anglo-Saxon and Irish MSS.*, examined the *Book of Kells* for hours with a magnifying glass, and could discern not a single false line or irregular interlacement, and in a space of three-quarters of an inch by a half inch in width he counted 158 interlacements (Douglas Hyde, *Literary History of Ireland*, p. 462).

[2] Stokes, pp. 11, 12; Reeves' *Adamnan*, p. 328.

belongs, was chequered and eventful. In Kells it was covered by a costly shrine made of gold, or at least in which gold was used, and in the eleventh century it was stolen from the western sacristy of the monastery. Its shrine was taken away and the book itself was buried in the earth, where it was discovered and dug up after two months and twenty days.[1] The manuscript itself suffered little or no injury. It became subsequently the property of Archbishop Usher, and after the Restoration it came, with what remained of his library, "ex dono Caroli II.," into the custody of Trinity College, Dublin, where it still remains, "the admiration and astonishment of every one who examines it."[2] It is a wonderful book. A cursory glance would declare that there was a redundancy of figures and lines and curves, a too great wealth of colour, a disorder and confusion even in its splendour. But a closer examination, and a minuter, will correct the falseness of this hasty judgment; and the more it is examined the greater appears its wealth of beauty—figures, lines, and colouring are so skilfully blended that it is amazing. There is no confusion, no disorder; at every fresh examination new beauties are revealed.[3] "Serpents, lizards, birds with legs and necks elongated and interlaced are found in every part of the great monogram page, while the human form is seen in four weird figures, whose bodies are entangled with those of birds, and who are blowing trumpets, which instruments are elongated so as to entwine the musicians in their inextricable coils. Three angels bearing books and one holding a sceptre crowned by a trefoil in each hand are seen to rest with outspread wings upon the main line of the letter X, while in the centre of the P a man's face appears, bearded, but not aged; and above all, and, as it were, emerging from a labyrinth of spiral lines, diverging and converging in endless succession, rises the veiled head of a

[1] *Four Masters*, at the year 1006. "This was the principal relic of the western world on account of its singular cover."

[2] Reeves' *Adamnan*, p. 328. Whoever sees it and examines it will fully agree with Dr. Reeves.

[3] Cambrensis, p. 99. Giraldus thought it could not be done by man, and perhaps was written by an angel.

woman."[1] A German scholar, Dr. Waagen of Berlin, has declared of the *Book of Kells* that "the ornamental pages, borders and initial letters exhibit such a rich variety of beautiful and peculiar designs, so admirable a taste in the arrangement of the colours, and such an uncommon perfection of finish, that one feels absolutely struck with amazement."[2] It is not the language of exaggeration to say that it is the most beautiful book in existence.

Working in metals was understood in Ireland even before Christianity was introduced, but it was in Christian times, and under the impulse of Christianity, that the art reached its highest excellence. The illuminated manuscript was the work of some pious monk, whose memory was revered and whose life and acts were considered in later times as the life and acts of a saint, and the book which came from his saintly hands, and was the product of his enthusiasm and his skill, was a precious inheritance, deserving of the greatest care, and worthy of the most costly shrine. His bones, a lock of his hair, a tooth, a shred of the garments that he wore, the book from which he preached to the people, the staff which supported the tottering steps of his old age, the bell which called the people to his Mass, the crozier which he wielded as a bishop,—such as these were objects of similar reverence and considered worthy of similar honour. And some of the finest metal-work of those times were shrines for these saintly relics. In the eighth and ninth centuries there were few, if any, of the principal churches in Ireland which had not these costly shrines.[3] But the Northman came, with no love for the Church and no reverence for the shrine or its contents, but with much greed for the precious metals from which it

[1] Stokes, p. 15.

[2] Westwood, *Anglo-Saxon and Irish MSS.*, p. 24. Westwood has reproduced a few whole pages from the *Book of Kells*, and in Trinity College may be seen many of the initial letters also, reproduced by a lady. The reproduction in each case is fresher and more vivid than the original, and is, no doubt, such as the original was when fresh from the scribe's hands.

[3] Hyde's *Literary History*, p. 457.

was made. Evil example is easily and quickly copied. The native chief learned to commit sacrilege from the foreigner, and one by one the shrines disappeared. But there are still a few which survived those dark days and the equally dark days that followed—covers for books, covers for bells and for croziers, and, besides, vessels for the altar, such as chalices, and at least one notable cross, the well-known Cross of Cong.

In other countries books were splendidly bound,[1] but in Ireland they were considered, after the lapse of time, too sacred to be touched, and were regarded in particular clans as pious heirlooms. Lying in its precious shrine, the book was committed to the custody of an important and respected member of the clan, whose family became its hereditary guardians; it was borne into battle by the order of the chief as an assurance that the writer of the book was assisting them by his prayers; and the chief of Tirconnell had such reverence for the cathach or battle-book, which was preserved in his family, that he dreaded even if it were opened he would be visited by some crushing calamity.[2] These shrines were called cumhdachs. That of the *Book of Durrow*[3] has been lost, and a special entry in the *Four Masters* records that the same fate befell the cumhdach of the *Book of Kells*. But the shrine of St. Molaise still remains, and is in the Museum of Science and Art, Dublin. It was executed within the years 1001 to 1025, is formed of plates of bronze, oblong in shape; and the ornamental portions consist of plates of silver with gilt patterns, riveted to the bronze foundation.[4] There is also the shrine of the Stowe missal, as well as that to contain the cathach or battle-book of the O'Donnells. Croziers, like books, were also sacred objects, had their special guardian, and were carried into battle; and the belief in Hy-Many was that when the crozier of St. Grellin was carried in the ranks of battle, the O'Kellys were certain of victory, for St. Grellin was aiding

[1] Stokes, p. 88. [2] *Ibid.* p. 89.
[3] The *Book of Durrow* itself is in Trinity College.
[4] Stokes, p. 91.

THE CROSS OF CONG

THE TARA BROOCH

IRON BELL OF ST. PATRICK

SHRINE OF ST. PATRICK'S BELL

EXAMPLES OF EARLY IRISH METAL-WORK

NOW IN THE ROYAL IRISH ACADEMY

them in the fight.[1] The croziers were made of wood, but it is the metal ornamental covering in which they were which challenges attention, in considering the metal-worker's art and to what proficiency it had attained. There are in existence portions of the crozier of St. Dympna, of St. Colman of Kilmacduach, and of St. Berach—the latter in the Museum of Science and Art, Dublin.[2] Of bells, the oldest we have, the oldest specimen of metal-work of any kind in Christian times, is St. Patrick's bell. It is rude in design and shape and entirely without ornament, nothing more than plates of iron joined by rivets and covered over on the inside with bronze, which helped to give resonance to its sound.[3] In the bronze bells of the tenth century, such as that of Cumasach, we have an example of a bell of cast bronze, the sound of which as well as the workmanship is separated from the bell of St. Patrick by a large interval of artistic skill.[4] Like the books, these bells had their shrines made for them especially in the period extending from the tenth to the twelfth century, the shrine of St. Patrick's bell being manufactured between 1091 and 1105, a fact which is gathered from the inscription.[5] Brass, gold, silver and precious stones are the materials employed, the ornamentation, as in the illuminated manuscript, being interlaced work; and the skill with which the threads of silver and gold are interlaced, the fineness of their texture, the accuracy and skill with which the scribes' art is reproduced in metal are admirable, and show to what a height of perfection the metal-worker's art had reached.

Besides these croziers and bells and shrines, there are three other objects of Irish metal-work which for beauty and finish can hardly be surpassed. These are the Tara Brooch, the Ardagh Chalice, and the Cross of Cong. The Tara Brooch is made of white bronze, a compound of copper and tin. The number and variety of its ornamented patterns, of which seventy-six different kinds are perceived, the delicacy of

[1] Stokes, p. 101.
[2] *Ibid.* pp. 97-99.
[3] *Ibid.* p. 58.
[4] *Ibid.* p. 65.
[5] *Ibid.* p. 66.

the filigree work, the happy combination of ornaments of amber and enamels and translucent glass, have caused Petrie to declare that it is superior to any hitherto found in the variety of its ornaments and in the exquisite delicacy and perfection of its execution.[1] Of the same age, and even more elaborate in ornamentation, is the Ardagh Chalice, dug up at Ardagh, in the last century, by a boy who was digging potatoes. The metals are gold, silver and bronze; its ornaments are of every kind peculiar to Irish Art—enamels, coloured glass, amber; the gold filigree work is shaped and drawn into every variety of form; there are different varieties of birds in its designs; there are other animal-forms as well; there are dragons' heads; and so cleverly are all these blended, that even the Tara Brooch can hardly rival it in beauty, and among chalices of that or any preceding age it stands unsurpassed.[2] Of a later age—it can hardly be said of more matured beauty of design—is the Cross of Cong. It was made during the first half of the twelfth century, during the reign of Turlogh O'Connor. His genius in war had raised him from the obscure position of King of Connaught to be first among the kings of Ireland, and, pre-eminent in war, he was also ambitious to cultivate the arts of peace, and gathered around him some of the most skilled artists in metal-work and stone. It was from the hands of one of these the Cross of Cong came. Intended to enshrine a portion of the true cross, it was made for the Church of Tuam, and meant to be carried in processions, the ornamental cross being fixed on a long shaft and borne on high. The upright portion of the cross is 30 inches, the cross-bar a little over 18 inches, and the thickness is $1\frac{3}{4}$ inch. The shaft rises from the mouth of an animal whose head rests on a spherical ball, and this surmounts the socket in which was temporarily inserted the long shaft when the cross was carried in procession. The cross itself is made of oak, but it is the covering of the face and back and sides that excites admiration. Over the plates, which cover the wood, there is much gold filigree work, the carving and

[1] Stokes, pp. 76-77. [2] *Ibid.* pp. 82-88.

interlacing being distinctively Irish, and of many and beautiful patterns. Along the face were many jewels, thirteen of which still remain ; at the central plate where the arms of the cross meet is a boss surmounted by a convex crystal, and round the boss were four beads, two of which still remain. There are inscriptions asking for prayers for Turlogh O'Connor, the reigning king ; for O'Duffy, the Archbishop of Tuam ; and for O'Egan, the artist. The cross, originally used at Tuam, was transferred to Cong by Roderick O'Connor. It was lost during the troubled times of the Reformation, and lay hidden during the long night of the penal times, until finally, in the nineteenth century, it was recovered, and now lies in the Museum of Science and Art, Dublin, where it can be seen.[1] And those who see it and admire it can declare that the metal-workers of the present may with advantage sit at the feet of their ancestors, for they can learn much from those artists of the far-distant past.

When St. Patrick came to Ireland, the arts of architecture and sculpture were but little cultivated by the inhabitants. The use of the stone chisel was understood, and the inscriptions in Ogham show that it was used to carve inscriptions on stone. But these inscriptions are of the rudest character, and in building it was the same. Most of the houses, no doubt, were of wood, and these have long since perished ; and what remains of stone buildings are not many. A few forts, such as Dun Angus in the Arran Islands, are the most remarkable. They have been called, and justly, Cyclopean buildings, for not even the Cyclops could have made any impression upon them. Mortar was not used, nor even grouting, and the stones, unpolished and uneven, are laid together so as to make walls enormously high and almost equally thick.[2] With the builders the chief consideration was strength and solidity ; they built, as it would seem, for eternity. The walls of Dun Angus have lived through the changing scenes of more than two thousand years ; wind and weather have not

[1] Stokes, pp. 107-9.

[2] The walls are 20 feet high and 18 feet thick (Stokes, *Building and Architecture*, p. 34).

affected them; they are likely to live on, for nothing but an earthquake could overturn them. In speaking of the church built at Lindisfarne by Finian, its bishop, Bede says that he built it of wood, after the manner of the Irish,[1] as if to indicate that the churches in Ireland were all built of wood. And when Malachy was building a stone church at Bangor, objection was made that they were Irish and not Gauls, and therefore, in the Irish fashion, the church should be of wood. From these and other such statements it has been concluded that all the Irish churches were of wood, and that stone was never used. Such a conclusion is not just. Wood abounded in Ireland then; its forests were large, timber was easily obtained, and with timber material a church was easily built, much easier than with stone, and hence timber was extensively used. But there were places where, on the contrary, timber was scarce and stones were plentiful; the material next to hand was employed, and as early as the days of St. Patrick there were churches of stone. These churches, modelled perhaps on a design introduced by St. Patrick himself, were simple in plan and all built on the same lines. They were quadrangular in shape, the largest being not more than 60 feet in length—that at Inchigoill in Lough Corrib was only 35; the door was on the west end, the chancel, when there was one, at the east end, and connected with the nave by a semicircular arch.[2] There were no side aisles, no transepts, no apse, as in the Roman basilicas. The roof was often of wood covered with reeds or straw or shingles—in the smaller churches sometimes of stone.[3] The windows were few and small, without glass, splayed internally, and sometimes were triangular-headed, sometimes semicircular.[4] The doors were never arched, but instead were covered with a lintel, and were narrower at the top than at the bottom. The walls were faced with large stones, whose surfaces were made smooth; in the centre was rubble, and in the course of time,

[1] Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*, book iii. chap. 25. "He made it (the church) not of stone but of hewn wood, and covered it with reeds"; it was afterwards covered with plates of lead.

[2] Petrie, *Round Towers and Ancient Architecture of Ireland*, pp. 162-4.

[3] *Ibid.* pp. 186-7

[4] *Ibid.* p. 183.

grouting. The doors and windows, especially the doorways, were made with very large stones, the lintel being usually of great size. The lintel used in the doorway of the church at Kilmacduagh was nearly 6 feet long, 38 inches wide, and 21 inches thick; its weight must have been considerable, and the labour of placing it in position great.[1] Such were the churches built in the sixth and seventh centuries, small compared to those of a later date, plain but strong, built to last, and without ornament of any kind, if we except an attempt at architrave in one or two instances. Such were the churches of Inchigoill, of Ratass near Tralee, of Our Lady's Church at Glendalough, of Fore in Westmeath, all built before the close of the seventh century; the first named, that at Inchigoill, having an inscription which fixes the date of its construction as early as the days of St. Patrick.

These buildings exhibit Irish architecture in its infancy. It was not, perhaps, poverty that compelled the people to build in such simple fashion, nor could it be ignorance where the arts were so flourishing. With their attachment to the past and their veneration for the first Saints, it may have been a reluctance to change from the models given them. And such churches, where the view of the altar was uninterrupted, and where the decorations that art supplies did not attract the attention of the worshippers, or turn their minds from their devotions, consorted well with a people whose piety was so remarkable and whose faith was so earnest and so intense. But this primitive simplicity could not last. There was much intercourse with the Continent. The students who flocked to the schools of Ireland drew glowing pictures of the splendour of churches in foreign lands; the Irish who went abroad contrasted with a sigh their own rudely-built churches with the products of Roman architecture; a spirit of emulation among the Irish was engendered, and as they acquired eminence in the illumination of manuscripts and in metal-work, and their fame as scholars was world-wide, they also began to cultivate the arts of architecture and sculpture, and they did so with success.

[1] Petrie, p. 176.

The doors as well as the windows of the churches began to be built with semicircular arches at the top, instead of the horizontal lintel; ornaments were employed; and in the doorways of the churches at Inniscaltra and Kildare, both of which are referred to the end of the eighth or beginning of the ninth century, we have three concentric receding arches instead of one,[1] we have ornamented columns zigzag, or chevron moulding, on the inner roof or soffit of one arch, while on another is some pattern taken from flowers.[2] The capitals of the columns are decorated with human heads, the bases of the columns are similarly decorated, and the intricacy and skill with which the hair of these heads is joined together, plaited and interwoven, recall the ornaments of the illuminated manuscripts.[3] More varied in its decorations, perhaps also of a later date, is the chancel arch in the church at Glendalough.[4] But a fatal check was given to this advancement in decoration and design. When the Danes came they everywhere attacked the churches, and instead of new and more beautiful churches being built, the existing ones were destroyed, nor was it until the Danes themselves were vanquished that the work of church building could be resumed.

There had been many changes in the meantime. The basilican churches had given place to the primitive Romanesque, and this again to a Romanesque style more finished, more decorated, more complete. In France, in England, in Ireland and in Italy the churches were all built on a Roman model;[5] but the architecture of each country had its distinctive peculiarities, was modified by local surroundings, and was shaped in accordance with the tastes and genius of the people. And in each country the progress was gradual. In the chancel arch of the church at Killaloe, built probably by Brian Boru, there are concentric arches, the shafts of the columns from which these

[1] Petrie, pp. 282-3. This was the doorway at Inniscaltra.

[2] *Ibid.* p. 209.

[3] *Ibid.* p. 236. This was the doorway at Timahoe.

[4] *Ibid.* pp. 256-7. This was the Church of the Monastery.

[5] *Architecture: Classic and Early Christian* (Smith and Slater, Art Handbooks), pp. 203-23 *et seq.*

arches spring are cylindrical, and the capitals of the columns are ornamental ;[1] more highly decorated is the doorway of the church at Freshford,[2] but the highest and most perfect type of Irish Romanesque is Cormac's Chapel, built on the Rock of Cashel. Nearly eight centuries have passed since it was completed—in the reign of Cormac MacCarthy, King of Cashel[3]—and walls and doorways and windows and stone roof still remain, firm and uninjured, as little affected by storm and weather and the destroying influence of time as the rock upon which the church stands. It is not a large church ; it is rather a royal chapel, as indicated by its name. It has neither aisles nor transepts, and, except two towers which are Norman-looking in appearance, it has nothing but a nave and chancel, with the usual chancel arch as a connecting-link. But it lacks nothing in multiplicity and variety of ornament. The openings are all arched with the rounded semicircular arch, resting on cylindrical columns ; these openings consist of many concentric arches, that of one door having no less than five different ones ; and doorways and windows and chancel arch are all decorated.[4] The shafts of the columns are in some cases fluted ; some of the arches have chevron mouldings, in another case it is a series of human heads, but the greatest diversity of ornamentation occurs in the capitals of the columns. There are animals of various kinds, interlaced horse-shoes, inverted truncated cones (one like the Ionic volute), grotesque heads (human and otherwise), and other ornamentations somewhat difficult to classify or describe.[5] This diversity of ornament recalls, not the pattern, but rather the number of the decorations on the Tara Brooch. The roof is vaulted, its construction showing considerable scientific skill ; it was also frescoed, the colours of the frescoes being red, yellow, brown and white. Had Giraldus seen this beautiful church, he would hardly have spoken of the Irish as a barbarous people ; and he would have learned that,

[1] Petrie, p. 283. [2] *Ibid.* p. 285.
[3] *Ibid.* pp. 290-91. It was consecrated either in 1134 or 1135.
[4] Stokes, *Building and Architecture*, p. 77.
[5] Petrie, pp. 296-304.

besides music, they cultivated others of the fine arts and excelled in them.

In addition to the ornamentation on the doorways and windows of the churches, several other examples of ancient Irish sculpture remain. There are many Ogham inscribed stones, which belong to an earlier period; there are tombstones, which are usually flat slabs laid upon the earth; there are pillar stones and altar stones; but the finest specimens of Irish sculpture are the High Crosses. Their age has been ascertained as extending from the tenth to the thirteenth century; their object was to commemorate some deed, or to be dedicated to the memory of some saint. Their form is that of the Latin Cross, the most characteristically Irish feature being the circle which in every case surrounds the arms of the cross. The faces and sides are divided into panels, each panel having a group of sculptured figures intended to illustrate some event in the Old or New Testament, or to impart some Christian lesson. On one of the crosses at Monasterboice, in the panels which have been so far deciphered, the subjects are the Fall of Man, the Expulsion from Eden, Adam Delves and Eve Spins, Cain killing Abel, the Magi, Michael and Satan at the Weighing of Souls, and the Crucifixion and Last Judgment. On another cross there were twenty-four panels, in only six of which have the groups of figures been deciphered; at Clonmacnoise, of twenty-four panels, just half of the groups can be made out; and at the Tuam Cross, on one side is the Crucifixion, on another the figure of a bishop, and on another panel a funeral procession.[1] Surrounding these panels and running along the sides and arms of the cross are various ornamentations—the interlaced lines, the divergent spirals, which are met with so often in manuscripts and on metal-work, and which are produced on these stones with a fidelity, a delicacy, a lightness of touch, a happy combination of one with another, which could only come from the highest artistic skill.

The sculptured figures themselves—bishops, abbots, kings,

[1] Stokes, *Sculpture*, pp. 18-22.

saints and angels—are but rudely drawn, and it is here that the failure of the Irish sculptors is conspicuous. The artists knew little of human anatomy. The feet and hands are disproportioned, the figure awkward and ungainly, the features vague and ill-defined, the face without power—dull, inanimate and expressionless, where neither passion nor emotion are portrayed, and where we fail to read pride or power, or courage or fear, or anguish or despair. And the draperies are equally rude—ill-fashioned and ill-arranged—thrown carelessly upon the figure, without any sense of artistic fitness, or any lines of beauty in their folds. It is art in its infancy, where the shadows cast are grotesque, and the moving, sentient human figure does not appear. But it is right to remember that the sculptor's object was to convey a religious lesson, to preach a sermon in stone, and not to portray the beauty and symmetry of the human form. To cause the naked human figure to exhibit its strength and proportions, the muscles of the body, the play of the features, the emotions with which it was stirred—they would have considered such a debasement of sculpture, a servile and unworthy copying of the pagans. Their art was directed and controlled and permeated by religion ; it was its handmaiden—if necessary, even its slave. It was the lesson of the Crucifixion, of the Resurrection, of the Betrayal of Christ, and the other scenes they drew—it was these lessons above all that they wished to teach. It was upon these scenes they wanted the spectators to fix their thoughts, and not upon the beauty of the separate sculptured figures ; and perhaps the rude figures that they drew attained better the object they had before their minds than if they had chiselled them with the genius of Phidias or Praxiteles.

But of all the works of stone which have survived the wreck of ages, and whose appearance points to a far-distant past, the most widely known, the most spoken of and written of are the Round Towers. There is some diversity in the masonry of these buildings, for the roughly-dressed stones of Lusk and Clondalkin, and their narrow, square-headed apertures, separate them by a long interval from the round-arched and

decorated openings of Timahoe and Ardmore.[1] Some of these towers are now imperfect, but a good number still remain in their original condition, and among them there is some variation in the height, the highest—that of Lusk—being 100 feet, while that of Turlogh, in Mayo, is only 70 feet. The architectural features are the same throughout—a tall round tower, pierced along its sides by a few narrow openings, and covered with a stone cone-like roof. It is, however, round the question as to what was the origin and uses of these buildings that controversies have raged. Finding these structures different from any in other countries, and in Ireland itself a survival of a long past age, the records of which in part at least have been lost, many have undertaken to say when and for what purpose they were built, and each has his own peculiar theory to propound. In origin they were said to be Danish,[2] or Phoenician; they were said to be fire temples,[3] or lofty heights from which the Druidical festivals were to be proclaimed, as the muezzin proclaims prayer from the minaret. They were said to be astronomical observatories, or phallic emblems, or Buddhist temples, or anchorite towers, or penitential prisons; and lastly, they were belfries or monastic keeps, or watch-towers. Of these theories, some are ingenious, some are absurd, some are fanciful and arbitrary, most are sustained with learning and ability, and not a few are supported by great names. But neither by itself is satisfactory, and the problem as to when and why they had been built seemed to be as insoluble as the riddle of the Sphinx. At last a man appeared who had no theories to propound, who sought only for the truth, and who had many qualifications for the task he undertook. This was George Petrie, a man whose services to Irish Archaeology have been great, and whose name Ireland should always hold in honour. His tastes were antiquarian, his learning was extensive and profound; he knew the Irish

[1] Stokes, *Building and Architecture*, p. 51.

[2] This is the opinion of Lynch in his *Cambrensis Eversus*, of Peter Walsh, of Dr. Molyneaux, and of Ledwich (Petrie, pp. 5-10).

[3] This was Vallancey's opinion (Petrie, pp. 12, 13).

ROUND TOWER AND ABBEY OF TIMAHOE

FROM A LITHOGRAPH BY J. D. HARDING

language, and therefore could make use of ancient chronicles and records and decipher ancient inscriptions; architecture he was specially familiar with; he was patient and persevering, had no preconceived notions or theories, was well qualified to weigh and value arguments and reasons, and spared neither time nor labour. He visited these towers himself, examined their peculiarities—the style of their masonry and their architecture, and the buildings with which they were associated—sought out the various references to them in the oldest of the Irish books, and then, having exhausted every source from which light could be thrown upon the inquiry, he was prepared to pass judgment. The Danish origin of the towers was easily disposed of, for the Danes, neither in Ireland nor elsewhere, built much; their genius was rather for destruction, and their track was marked not by the buildings they had erected, but by the ruins they had made. The theory that they were of Eastern origin and were used as fire temples was that of Vallancey, a man, says Thomas Davis, "of little learning, little industry, great boldness, and no scruples,"[1] qualifications but ill suited for success in historical inquiry. His speculations are bold and reckless, his dissertations on the etymology of Irish words ridiculous, and his arguments without value;[2] and *his* theory may be safely discarded. Nor is Dr. Charles O'Connor convincing in *his* theory that they were astronomical towers,[3] nor Harris and Usher in thinking that they were pillar towers such as that on which Simon Stylites lived; and

[1] Davis's *Essays*, p. 67. Vallancey published these theories in his work *Collectanea de Rebus Hibernicis*.

[2] His conjectures have the appearance of being learned and profound, but their worthlessness and shallowness are exhaustively examined and exposed by Petrie (pp. 13-30). For instance, "the Hebrew word *gadul* means *great*, and thence a tower; the Irish name for a round tower, cloghad, is from *gadul*, and clogh, a stone; and the Druids called every place of worship cloghad" (Davis's *Essays*, p. 68). Such guesses are aptly called childish by Davis.

[3] Dr. Lanigan (vol. iv. pp. 406-8) in part follows Vallancey and in part Dr. O'Connor, for he thinks that the lower story of the towers would be used for fire-worship and the higher for astronomical observation.

the Phallic theory never had any support except "in Henry O'Brien's enthusiastic ignorance."

Having disposed of all these and such-like theories, Petrie's own judgment was that these towers were built when Ireland was harassed by the Danes; that they were therefore of Christian origin; that their main purpose was to serve as monastic keeps, where the precious vessels of the adjoining church were kept for safety and could be defended with ease; and that besides they served as belfries, and were also used as watch-towers. And Petrie's reasons are strong and convincing. The towers are usually found in connexion with ecclesiastical buildings,[1] their architecture in doorways and windows is the same as these buildings and distinguishable from the various remains of Irish pagan architecture, and their value as keeps for sacred objects is apparent. The marauding Danes had special enmity to the churches, and were anxious to seize the sacred objects they contained — chalices, ciboriums, crosses, shrines, vestments and manuscripts. A monk placed on the summit of one of these towers, like the look-out on a vessel or a sentinel on a watch-tower, could easily perceive the advancing foe and warn the inmates of his monastery; and when the Danes arrived the gold and silver of the church was beyond their reach. In the open the Danish battle-axe was a dangerous and effective weapon, but it was powerless against strong walls of stone; the masonry is not so easily detached in a round building as in a rectangular one, the windows were small, and being a long distance from the earth, not easily reached, and even when an entrance to the tower had been gained a series of successive assaults had to be made. For there were several stories; the defenders, driven from one, went to a higher, whence they could throw down stones on the heads of their assailants, or hurl darts at them as they advanced. Whoever will read Petrie's work will be struck by the learning

[1] Dr. Lanigan's notion is that the tower came first in pagan times and the church in Christian times, the purpose being to worship God in those places where formerly they worshipped the sun and fire (vol. iv. p. 408).

of the author, and the skill with which he marshals his arguments, and he will conclude, if he is open to argument and conviction, that fanciful theories can be safely laid aside, and that Petrie has settled, once and for ever, the long agitated question as to the origin and use of the Round Towers.

CHAPTER XIII

The Anglo-Norman Invasion

DURING the centuries that preceded the Danish invasion, the rivalries of Irish chiefs seemed endless, and each province was in turn the scene of bloodshed and strife and must have heavily suffered ; but of all these provinces none suffered so much as Leinster, which was seldom an aggressor and fought only to resist attack. Unjustly burdened with the Boru tribute, it paid only with reluctance and under compulsion, while successive Ardris exacted the imposition, with the infliction of much suffering on the tributary province. With an army they often entered Leinster and wasted and plundered it through its whole extent ; at the battle of Allen (717) almost the whole population of Leinster was destroyed, and in 804 Aedh Oirnidhe, the Ardri, with a large army of the laity and clergy,[1] devastated Leinster twice in one month, and not content with getting his full demand from the Leinstermen, he wantonly entered that province in the following year and cut it in two. The other provinces looked on while Leinster was thus harassed and overrun ; Leinster itself was overmatched in the unequal contest, and, driven to desperation, the Leinstermen sometimes allied themselves with the pagan Danes, and against those of their own country and faith. On some occasions they might be excused

[1] Up to that date the clergy were compelled to go to war and to fight as well as the laity, and on this occasion the whole clergy of Leath Chuin were with the Ardri—a strange occupation for the clergy it was! They complained of their grievance to the king, and he referred the matter to Fotha, the Canonist, who wrote a poem by way of answer. He strongly advised the king to dispense with the attendance of the clergy, and hereafter they were not present in the battle as combatants. What seems strange is that Adamnan did not get them exempt in his day as he had done in the case of women (*Four Masters*, vol. i. p. 409).

altogether, or at least some palliation of their guilt might be discovered, but it is impossible not to condemn their attitude at Glenmama, and, above all, at Clontarf. During the long period of discord that succeeded the fall of Brian, Leinster was no worse off than its neighbours, for all the provinces were wasted by constant war, all were reduced to the same equality, an equality of strife and bloodshed and misery; Leinster was no longer the outcast it had been, the sport of succeeding Ardris. A time came when she attained pre-eminence herself; and one of her kings—Diarmuid Maelnambo—was, in his time, the most powerful and the most feared among the Irish kings.

In the twelfth century, Leinster once more acquired unenviable notoriety, and was placed, in relation to the other provinces, in a position of isolation and antagonism; and its king, MacMurrogh, eclipsing the treachery of Maelmorra, has earned for himself in history the odious epithets of the renegade and the traitor. Becoming king in 1121, he gave hostages to Turlogh O'Connor in the following year,[1] but a few years later (1128) he renounced his allegiance to the Connaught king. O'Connor was a dangerous man to provoke, and the desertion of Diarmuid was followed by the devastation of Leinster.[2] With O'Mellaghlin of Meath he was at war in 1136, and again eight years later, when the kingdom of Meath was partitioned by O'Connor, MacMurrogh getting a third of the province as his share of the spoil. Again in alliance with Turlogh, he fought at the battle of Moanmore (1152), so disastrous to the arms of Thomond.[3] These alliances with the most powerful of the Irish kings, coupled with his own undoubted capacity, had enlarged the bounds of his hereditary possessions and consolidated the strength of Leinster under his own personal rule. Yet among his own people he was not popular; he was more feared than loved; and though the prestige of success won him

[1] *Four Masters.* He went into Turlogh's house in Meath, *i.e.* while Turlogh was there on an expedition.

[2] *Ibid.* He plundered Leinster "far and wide."

[3] He was at war with Ossory and the Danes (1134), and with Waterford 1137).

followers, it did not win him their affection. The estimate of his character given by Irish writers cannot safely be accepted, for the memory of his treachery has roused their indignation, and the utterance of indignation is often the utterance of injustice. But Cambrensis had no special reason for hating MacMurrogh, or for heaping obloquy on his memory, yet his words are sufficiently strong and do not present Diarmuid in a favourable light. "Dermitus," he says, "was tall in stature and of large proportions, and being a great warrior and valiant in his nation, his voice had become hoarse by constantly shouting and raising his war-cry in battle. Bent more on inspiring fear than love, he oppressed his nobles, though he advanced the lowly. A tyrant to his own people, he was hated by strangers; his hand was against every man and the hand of every man against him."[1]

In the early part of his reign (1135) he had scandalized and outraged the moral and religious instincts of his subjects by his conduct towards the convent and Abbess of Kildare. Forcibly entering the building, with a number of his followers, he dragged the Abbess from her cloister, and, ignoring her tears and protestations and the entreaties of her nuns, he compelled her to marry one of his soldiers.[2] He lost the sympathy and even earned the hatred of the Leinster nobles (1141) by killing the lord of O'Faelain and the chief of the O'Tooles, and by killing, or blinding, seventeen other chiefs, besides others of inferior rank.[3] But the crime which brought him into conflict with the other Irish chiefs, and which, more than anything else, has affixed a stain upon his memory, was the taking away from her husband of Dervorgille,[4] wife of O'Rorke, King of Brefny. The lady was well past her fortieth year, while MacMurrogh was at least twenty years older; both had therefore reached an

[1] Giraldus Cambrensis, *The Conquest of Ireland*, p. 196.

[2] *Annals of Clonmacnoise.* It appears that the servants of the convent and the townsmen of Kildare resisted him by force, for one hundred and seventy of them were slain by Dermot.

[3] *Four Masters.* It was not in open fight he killed these chiefs, for the *Four Masters* says that "he acted treacherously towards the chieftains of Leinster."

[4] *Ibid.* at the year 1152.

age when the force and violence of youthful passion might have been moderated.[1] But MacMurrogh had never known what it was to impose restraint upon his passions, and it appears that the lady herself was not an unwilling victim, for she went in her husband's absence and she took with her all that she possessed. Not the least discreditable part of the affair was that she was acting with the knowledge and under the advice of her brother, O'Mellaghlin, King of Meath. O'Rorke appealed to his friend, Turlogh O'Connor, who led an army into Leinster (1153), defeated MacMurrogh, and brought away Dervorgille and restored her to her husband. She did not, however, live further with him, but retired to the convent at Mellifont, where she spent forty years in penance, deploring her crime and lamenting that she had brought so many evils on her country. With O'Rorke the recollection of the wrong done him by MacMurrogh was ever vivid, and once at least he entered Leinster and wreaked vengeance on the territory of his foe. But without support he could not hope to punish MacMurrogh as he deserved. With the death of Turlogh O'Connor his most powerful ally disappeared, and though Roderick, Turlogh's son, was his ally and friend, even more markedly than Turlogh had been, on the other side, MacMurrogh was befriended and sustained by O'Loughlin of Tirowen ; and against such a combination Roderick and O'Rorke were powerless. But when O'Loughlin was slain in battle (1166), and Roderick O'Connor became Ardri, O'Rorke's opportunity came, and he determined to chastise the ravisher by whom he had been so cruelly wronged. Aided by Roderick, he entered Leinster with a strong force. They were joined by MacTurkill, chief of the Dublin Danes—for they too hated Diarmuid,—by the King of Ossory, and by the various Leinster chiefs, all anxious to be emancipated

[1] *Four Masters*, at the year 1193 (Note by O'Donovan). Dervorgille was born in 1108, and was therefore forty-four years old, while Diarmuid was in the sixty-second year of his age. Dervorgille, besides her donations to Mellifont, built the "Church of the Nuns" at Clonmacnoise (1180) (*Annals of Clonmacnoise*, at the year 1180). The description which Regan (Diarmuid's secretary) gives of Dervorgille is that she was "a fair and lovely lady, entirely beloved of Diarmuid" (Harris's *Hibernica*, p. 11).

from his tyranny. Unable to cope with so many enemies, Diarmuid retired to the monastery of Ferns. He had hopes of obtaining assistance from at least one powerful Leinster chief —Murrogh O'Byrne—and sent a monk from Ferns with a letter to that chief. But O'Byrne would give him no assistance; he willingly joined his numerous enemies, and Diarmuid, fearing if he remained at Ferns that he might be betrayed to the Ardri, and perhaps put to death, left Leinster and fled beyond the sea.[1]

In his distress he went to England, hoping to win back his kingdom by the aid of that powerful monarch Henry II., whose will was undisputed from the Tweed to the Pyrenees. On his arrival at Bristol (1168), Diarmuid learned that Henry was in France, and after a short stay at Bristol—in the house of one Robert Harding—he proceeded thither. He found the English monarch at Aquitaine, told him the story of his wrongs, how his vassals had all risen in revolt against him and driven him into exile; and he offered, if Henry would aid him in recovering his kingdom, to become his vassal and subject and serve him faithfully during his life. With Aquitaine in revolt, Henry could not undertake an expedition into Ireland, or give Diarmuid the assistance which he sought, but he gave him letters authorizing his subjects to give assistance, and, armed with these documents, the exiled King of Leinster returned to England, and to Bristol. To Richard De Clare, Earl of Pembroke, Diarmuid first appealed. A certain Richard De Clare, a Norman Count, had come over with the Conqueror, who appraised his services so highly that he conferred upon him no less than one hundred and seventy-one manors in England.[2] One of his descendants, Gilbert De Clare, obtaining the requisite licence from Henry I., gathered together a motley and mercenary army,[3] entered Wales, and conquered

[1] Harris's *Hibernica*, p. 12 (Regan's narrative).

[2] Lingard's *History of England* (10 vols.), vol. i. p. 239.

[3] Composed of Normans, Flemings and English, the Flemings being specially distinguished as infantry. Thierry's *Norman Conquest*, vol. ii. pp. 17-18.

the whole of Pembrokeshire, which he parcelled out among his followers. In his wars he got the name of Strongbow from his troops, and the name passed on to his descendants. By King Stephen he was much favoured and honoured, and by him was created Earl of Strigul, near Chepstow, and subsequently (1140) Earl of Pembroke.[1] This Gilbert's son was Diarmuid's contemporary. He was reckless and extravagant, had wasted much of his ample patrimony, and, reduced to the position of the spendthrift and the gambler, was ready to embark on any expedition which might rehabilitate his fallen fortunes. And the prospect held out to him by Diarmuid was glittering, for he offered him his daughter in marriage, promising also that he would give her the whole kingdom of Leinster as her inheritance, so that Strongbow might hope to found a kingdom, as so many other Normans had done. But there was a difficulty. The friendship of his family for King Stephen did not recommend him to King Henry, but, on the contrary, caused him to be regarded with ill-favour and suspicion, and he dreaded to act on the general licence given to Diarmuid. He thought it safer to apply for and obtain a special licence to proceed to Ireland, but he bade Diarmuid be of good cheer; his vassals were many and as warlike and adventurous as himself—he might have added as greedy and as needy,—and as soon as he got the necessary licence from the King, he was prepared with his followers to cross the sea without delay.[2] Before leaving England, Diarmuid went to North Wales and engaged the services of a valiant knight, Robert Fitzstephen. He had been for some time detained a prisoner[3] by the native Welsh prince, Rhys-ap-Griffith, but at Diarmuid's request he was allowed to go free, but only on condition that he was to leave Wales and proceed to Ireland, a promise which he readily made. Satisfied at the arrangements he had made, Diarmuid left England at the close of the year, landed safely in Ireland, and

[1] Cambrensis, pp. 186-7. [2] *Hibernica*, p. 13.

[3] He had been in prison for three years, and according to Giraldus (p. 187) he was liberated on condition that he would assist Ap Griffith against Henry II.; but he preferred going to Ireland.

secretly took up his residence at Ferns to await the arrival of his allies. As they delayed perhaps longer than he expected, and certainly longer than he wished, Diarmuid, growing impatient, sent his secretary, Maurice Regan,[1] to Wales to announce to all that whoever would come to Ireland and aid the Leinster king in his wars would, if they wished to remain in Ireland, get lands to settle on, and if they were unwilling to remain, would get paid either in money or in cattle. These generous promises got support from many quarters, and the first contingent of the Anglo-Normans arrived early in the following year.

Little more than two centuries separate the age of Rollo from that of Strongbow, and in this interval the Normans had acquired immense power and influence throughout Europe. The whole of France from Flanders to Navarre was theirs; a Norman king ruled in Sicily, and England, their greatest possession, had been conquered for a hundred years. The change in their fortunes was not greater than the change in their manners; and if Rollo had still lived he would scarce have been able to recognize his descendants in the Normans of the twelfth century. The harsh accents of the North had given place to the softer speech of France, the pirate Norseman had ceased to exist; and the race that had been unaccustomed to fight except on foot now disdained to enter battle except on horseback. The destroyers of manuscripts loved to patronize learning and encourage literature, the levellers of churches had become builders of churches: in Norman hands Romanesque architec-

[1] It was Regan who wrote that fragment of Irish History which is the first of those "Pieces relating to Ireland" inserted in Harris's *Hibernica*, and which begins with the expulsion of Diarmuid MacMurrogh and ends with the siege of Limerick (1173), by Raymond Le Gros and Meyler FitzHenry. By Diarmuid he was much trusted, and in return he has shown a tenderness for the unfortunate king's memory, and perhaps the severest censure upon Diarmuid is that his faithful friend and secretary has nothing to say in his praise. Less sparkling and animated than Giraldus, he has less vanity as well; he has little or no prejudice, his style is simple, plain and unadorned, he contents himself with stating facts, writes of what he saw and the people that he knew, and his narrative throughout has the stamp of candour and of truth (*Hibernica*, Harris's Preface).

ture had acquired a beauty all its own, and in strength and solidity, even in beauty and refinement, the products of Norman architecture might bear favourable comparison with the most splendid buildings in Europe.[1] The rude barbarian, to whom pillage and plunder had been a delight, and to whom the tears of women had been often addressed in vain, had learned to become the champion of the oppressed and the weak, prided himself, and with justice, on his chivalry, felt honoured if selected by some high-born woman to defend her cause, and freely entered the lists at jousts and tournaments, and as freely shed his blood, to earn her favour and her smiles. The votaries of Woden, who once dreamt of Valhalla and its halls, and who hated Christianity because opposed to their pagan deities, had become the firmest defenders, the most resolute champions of the Church. In the first Crusade was a son of William the Conqueror; the Norman knights, Bohemond and Tancred,[2] shone conspicuous by their heroic achievements in an army where every man was brave, and besides these many were the Norman leaders who had left their castles and their lands to liberate Jerusalem from the Saracen. The Mohammedan power had been broken in Sicily by the heroic and intrepid Roger, son of Guiscard, the island had been restored to the jurisdiction of Rome, and its Norman rulers were now styled hereditary and perpetual legates of the Apostolic See.[3] It was with the Pope's blessing William the Conqueror had invaded England and Robert Guiscard had won Naples from the schismatic Greeks;[4] and against Henry III. of Germany, the foe and persecutor of Gregory VII., Guiscard had defended Rome.[5] But while the Normans had thus changed in many things, their valour and skill in battle remained unchanged; and never had the battle-axe of the Northman been more dreaded than the lance of the Norman. On many a field and against heavy odds that redoubtable lance had turned the tide of battle, for "in a martial age the Normans might claim the palm of valour and

[1] *Classic and Early Christian Architecture* (Smith and Slater), p. 231.
[2] Gibbon, vol. iv. p. 220.
[3] *Ibid.* vol. iv. p. 142.
[4] *Ibid.* vol. iv. pp. 138-9.
[5] *Ibid.* vol. iv. p. 151.

glorious achievement." Under William of Hautville, in Sicily (1038), 500 Normans had routed no less than 60,000 Saracens,[1] and, two years later, the same number of Greeks had been defeated in Apulia by 700 horse and 500 foot; but it seems incredible, though it is gravely related, that in the war in Sicily (1069-90) 50,000 Saracens had fled before 136 Normans.[2]

A century in England had not much changed these Normans. They were as brave and daring as their kinsmen on the Continent, loved change and adventure, and were ready to embark on any enterprise which promised the excitement of war and conquest. Their arms, their armour, their method of fighting were the same. Their troops were of two kinds, knights and archers—the former always fighting on horseback, the archers usually on foot. These knights are sometimes called men-at-arms and sometimes gentlemen of service.[3] The warriors of the Crusades received the sword and lance, the shield and banner of a knight with much solemnity, in which the religious ceremonies were not the least important part.[4] Compared with these, and restricting the term knight to those who had passed through all these forms, the followers of Strongbow and Fitzstephen were not entitled to the name. But the term had been extended, and, in England especially, had received a new significance, and was applied to those vassals who, in accordance with the system established by William the Conqueror, held their lands by military tenure.[5] They were bound to aid their master in his wars, to equip and maintain for his service a certain number of horsemen fully armed, and to serve him in the field as a knight. These men-at-arms or knights who came to Ireland were all of good birth, some in possession of lands, some who had forfeited the lands they

[1] Gibbon, vol. iv. p. 132.

[2] *Ibid.* vol. iv. p. 142. Gibbon sneeringly adds, "without reckoning St. George, who fought on horseback in the foremost ranks."

[3] Cambrensis, pp. 202-3, note (*Conquest of Ireland*).

[4] "The Normans" (*Story of the Nations*), pp. 157-67. Before being invested the candidate went to confession and received Holy Communion, heard Mass and also a sermon.

[5] Lingard's *History of England*, vol. i. pp. 240-1.

once possessed; others the sons of those who held lands by knights' service, others merely adventurers, ready to embark in any cause, however desperate; others, like Mountmaurice, rather a spy than a soldier, "who was a man of fallen fortunes and had neither arms nor money."[1] Besides what attendants he had on foot, each knight went into battle with at least two attendants on horseback, not clothed in armour like himself, from head to foot, but only partially armour-clad and trained to fight like their master on horseback.

In May 1169 Diarmuid's hopes of obtaining English aid were realized, for at that date Robert Fitzstephen arrived in Ireland, bringing with him a small army of near four hundred men—30 knights or men-at-arms, twice that number of horsemen in half armour, and 300 archers or footmen. Transported in three vessels, they landed at Bannow in Wexford the following day; at the same place Maurice De Prendergast arrived, bringing with him, in two vessels, ten knights and a large number of archers.[2] The whole force, which must have numbered between 600 and 700 fighting men, was under the supreme command of Fitzstephen, but associated with him was De Prendergast, Meyler FitzHenry, Henry or Hervey De Mountmaurice, and Meyler Fitzdavid, "son to the Bishop of St. David's."[3] The news was quickly conveyed to Diarmuid in his retreat at Ferns, and, mustering some 500 Irish troops, he joined his forces with the invaders, and the whole army thus composed marched to the attack of Wexford. The town was garrisoned by 2000 men, who, when they heard of the approach of the enemy, boldly marched forth to meet them; but when they saw the Anglo-Normans, clothed in complete armour and mounted on heavy Flemish horses, also covered with armour, they wisely judged it was useless to contend in the open against such foes, and that battle-axe and shield were unevenly matched against lance and coat of mail. The town was surrounded by a wall with towers and battlements; behind the shelter of these fortifications they could more effectually defend

[1] Cambrensis, p. 189. [2] *Ibid.* pp. 189-90.
[3] *Hibernica*, p. 16 (Regan's narrative).

themselves, and, burning the suburbs, they retired within the town itself. The English advanced to the walls, which they gallantly assaulted, but the defenders cast down stones and beams on their heads, and they had to retire with the loss of eighteen of their number killed, while the Irish lost but three. In a second assault they were not more successful; but the Wexfordmen knew that these assaults would be repeated, and they seemed to have lost confidence in themselves and to quickly get weary of the struggle. On the advice of two bishops, who happened to be in the town, negotiations were opened between the besieged and the besiegers; the town was delivered to Diarmuid, and the townsmen swore fealty to him and delivered four of their chief men as hostages. And so pleased was he with his English allies, that he gave the town of Wexford over to Fitzstephen, some adjoining lands to De Prendergast, and a district between Wexford and Waterford to Mountmaurice.[1] Elated by his success, strong in the strength and superiority of his allies, his ranks swelled by the Wexford men, whose accession brought the number of his army up to 3000 men, Diarmuid felt secure of recovering all he had lost, and hoped even to be revenged on his foes; nor was his desire to recover his lost kingdom more intense than his thirst for revenge.

Against Donogh, King of Ossory, he was specially embittered. That prince had deserted him in his time of trial, he had joined the ranks of the enemies that encompassed him—O'Rorke, O'Connor, and others—and, what was still harder to be borne, he had taken prisoner his only legitimate son and heir, Enna, and he had cruelly put out his eyes.[2] Diarmuid proposed to his English allies that Ossory be attacked, nor had they any hesitation in carrying out his wishes. They were his soldiers, they had come to do his work, they were receiving his pay, and it did not concern them who was attacked, nor would they hesitate to fight with Diarmuid's greatest enemy if they received higher pay.[3] Accompanied by his illegitimate

[1] Cambrensis, pp. 191-2.

[2] *Four Masters*, at the year 1168. Donogh is sometimes called Magillapatrick and sometimes FitzPatrick.

[3] *Hibernica*, p. 15.

son, Domhnall Kavanagh, his 3000 Irish troops, and all his foreign auxiliaries, Diarmuid soon entered Ossory. Wisely avoiding an encounter in the open, the Ossorymen drew the invaders into the woods and bogs, they dug deep trenches and planted them with hedges, and when attacked they resisted the whole strength of the invading army from morning till night, nor was it except through his English allies that Diarmuid gained a partial and doubtful, though bloody, victory. Nor did he think it safe to advance farther into Ossory; on the contrary, he thought it safer to return; and so little were the Ossorymen dismayed that at a certain pass through which Diarmuid's army was retiring, they were attacked by the King of Ossory with 2000 men. At first the assailants were successful, and the Irish troops of Diarmuid fled for shelter to the woods; but the English gradually fell back from the marshy ground, where they had been attacked, to ground of a harder nature, the Ossorymen impetuously pursued, when suddenly the retiring force turned on their pursuers and Fitzstephen with his men-at-arms rode down upon them, killing many with their long lances. Diarmuid's men hiding in the woods plucked up courage, issued from their hiding-places, fell upon the wavering and retreating Ossorymen, and killed many whom the lances of the English had spared. Over two hundred heads of his foes were collected and laid at Diarmuid's feet.[1] Seeing among them the head of one he mortally hated, he took it up by the ears and hair and "tore the nostrils and lips in a most savage and inhuman manner."[2] This incident is recorded by Giraldus, but suppressed by Regan, whose love for his old master seems to have been greater than his love of truth. On his return to Ferns, Diarmuid received the submission of many of the Leinster chiefs, who saw his increase of power and dreaded incurring his wrath. Neither O'Toole nor O'Faelain would submit, and Diarmuid, entering their territories, spoiled and wasted them and returned to Ferns, laden with spoil.

[1] *Hibernica*, p. 17. Regan gives the exact number—220.
[2] Cambrensis, p. 193.

All this pleased Diarmuid; but Ossory was still unsubdued, and he would not rest satisfied until his old enemy, Donogh, was utterly destroyed; and once more mustering all his strength, English and Wexford men combined, he entered Ossory. Donogh pursued his usual skilful tactics, fled before the invaders, and at a place called Achadh-ur dug trenches, which he manned with his best troops. The Wexfordmen, "with much courage," led the attack on Diarmuid's side, but the Ossorymen were equally brave, and for three days the battle continued, nor was it until the English had been able to intervene that the trenches were captured and the Ossorymen driven back. They retreated farther still into Ossory; Diarmuid and his allies were afraid to pursue them, and again, preying and spoiling the country through which they passed, Diarmuid returned to Ferns. But Donogh of Ossory had not yet submitted, and Diarmuid's own conduct did not promise further success. His arrogance, it appears, kept pace with his victories; he offended some of his English allies; and Prendergast especially was so disgusted with his conduct, that with his 200 soldiers he marched to Wexford, and resolved to return to Wales. The Wexfordmen, by orders of Diarmuid, stayed his progress at the port, and, unable to embark, he passed over with his troops to the service of Donogh of Ossory, and with him made incursions into Diarmuid's territories, and subsequently reduced O'More of Leix in subjection to Ossory. These services of Prendergast were but ill requited in Ossory; he received but little thanks; treachery even was meditated against him; and, displeased with the service he was engaged in, and disgusted with those whom he served, he made his way to Waterford and passed over to England.[1]

During the progress of these events Roderick O'Connor

[1] *Hibernica*, pp. 192-3. Perhaps one of the reasons for Prendergast's being displeased with Diarmuid may be that he had transferred, either in whole or in part, the land he formerly assigned to him near Wexford to Maurice FitzGerald. In Giraldus (p. 192) it is said that he gave Wexford to Fitzstephen and Maurice, which must be Maurice De Prendergast, as FitzGerald had not yet arrived, while in Regan it is said he gave Wexford to Fitzstephen, and the Corrig, near Wexford, to FitzGerald.

remained inactive. Without any of his father's energy of character or capacity, he failed to appreciate the significance of what was taking place, regarded those new invaders merely as mercenaries of Diarmuid employed by him to fight his battles, as in other days and by other chiefs the Danes had been employed. But when all Leinster had been overrun, when O'Faelain and O'Toole had been plundered and Ossory had been laid waste, his torpid energy was roused: he appealed to the princes and chiefs; war was resolved against Diarmuid, and Roderick found himself at the head of a large army. Yet, instead of fighting, he commenced to negotiate. The elaborate speeches made by Diarmuid, Fitzstephen and Roderick, as recorded by Giraldus, need not be included in a sober narrative of facts; but amid the mass of rhetoric and declamation we can discern that Roderick offered presents and money to Fitzstephen if he would leave Ireland—a thing which Fitzstephen refused to do—that, failing in this, he made terms with Diarmuid, recognizing him as King of Leinster; Diarmuid, on his side, acknowledging Roderick as Ardri, and giving him his son Conor as a hostage. There was further a secret treaty between them that Diarmuid would send away his new allies as soon as possible.[1] This treaty Diarmuid had no intention of keeping; his anxiety was to ward off the danger that menaced him; and so far from sending away his allies was he, that he warmly welcomed a fresh band of near 200, who had landed at Wexford under Maurice FitzGerald.[2] He encouraged his son-in-law, Domhnall O'Brien of Thomond, to throw off his allegiance to the Ardri, and when Roderick attacked his rebellious vassal and entered his territory with an army, the rebel was aided by Fitzstephen and the Anglo-Normans, and the Ardri was driven back to Connaught, defeated and disgraced.[3]

Diarmuid was not yet satisfied, and, rejoicing that he had

[1] Cambrensis, pp. 195-202.

[2] *Ibid.* p. 203. FitzGerald was half-brother to Fitzstephen, and had with him 10 men-at-arms, 30 mounted retainers, and 100 archers and foot soldiers.

[3] *Ibid.* p. 204.

deluded and weakened the Ardri, he began to hope that he might become Ardri himself. For this design he wanted more help from England, and sent an urgent request to Strongbow to hasten his coming. "We have watched (he says) the storks and the swallows; the summer birds have come and are gone again with the southerly wind; but neither winds from the east nor the west have brought us your much desired and long expected presence. . . ."[1] The swallow had deferred his flight, but it was not his fault. Repeatedly Strongbow had asked for the necessary permission from Henry II., but so far had not obtained it; and as soon as he did, he wrote to Diarmuid that he was making all necessary preparations for his departure and would soon be with him. In the meantime he sent his friend Raymond Le Gros (May 1170) with a small force—10 men-at-arms and 70 archers.[2] He landed at Dundonald, a few miles from Waterford,[3] where he was soon besieged by an army of 3000—the men of Waterford and Ossory.[4] He had been joined by Hervey De Mountmaurice and one or two other knights, but his whole forces scarce numbered one hundred. He had taken the precaution of fortifying his position, and he had gathered within the enclosure a large number of cattle from the surrounding lands. When the enemy assailed him, he opened the gates, drove out the cattle, followed with his troops and fell upon the broken and disordered ranks of the Irish, killing a large number of them[5] and taking seventy prisoners. The unfortunate prisoners had their limbs first broken in pieces and then, while they were yet living, were hurled headlong into the sea from the neighbouring cliffs.[6] Raymond stayed at Dundonald until the arrival of Strongbow.

[1] Cambrensis, p. 205. The thoughts of this letter may be (and this is unlikely) the thoughts of Diarmuid, but assuredly the words are the words of Giraldus.

[2] *Ibid.* p. 206.

[3] *Ibid.* The place was eight miles from Waterford and twelve from Wexford.

[4] *Hibernica*, p. 23.

[5] Regan says that 1000 were killed in battle.

[6] Giraldus (p. 211) puts the blame for this inhuman conduct on Mountmaurice, and says that Raymond was for mercy.

THE MARRIAGE OF STRONGBOW AND EVA

FROM THE PAINTING BY DANIEL MACLISE, R.A., IN THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF IRELAND

On the 27th of August following, Strongbow, with 1600 men, of whom 200 were men-at-arms, landed at Waterford, and having been joined by Raymond and his small army, with his whole force he attacked Waterford. The assault was twice repulsed, but, through the skill of Raymond Le Gros,[1] a breach was made in the walls, and the invaders entered the town and slaughtered the inhabitants without mercy. The Danish rulers of the city retreated into Reginald's tower, where they long and gallantly resisted, but the place was ultimately captured and both chiefs were put to death.[2] News of these events quickly reached Diarmuid, nor did he delay until he arrived at Waterford, bringing with him his daughter Eva, Strongbow's destined bride. The nuptials were celebrated amid unusual surroundings. The streets ran red with the blood of its citizens, all around were scenes of death and slaughter, and in this city, stricken with sorrow, a city of death and mourning and lamentation, the marriage of Strongbow and Eva MacMurrogh took place. Leaving a garrison at Waterford, Diarmuid and his son-in-law marched north to Ferns, where their delay was but short, and then, gathering all their forces, they proceeded northwards, through the mountains of Wicklow, to attack the city of Dublin. No resistance was offered to their advance, and the affrighted citizens of Dublin soon beheld the banners of the invaders waving outside the walls of the city.[3] Against an army which included nearly 5000 English troops,[4] and in which the number of Irish must have been much greater, the citizens had little prospect of being able to defend themselves. And if the city were taken by force, they had reason to dread the wrath of Diarmuid. They had hated his father; while sitting in a court of justice in the city a party of them had murdered him, and to his dead body they had tied the body of a dog, and the dead dog and the dead king were buried

[1] Cambrensis, p. 212.

[2] Regan (p. 24) calls them Reginald and Smorth; Giraldus calls them the two Sitrics.

[3] *Hibernica*, p. 25.

[4] Regan gives the numbers—700 under Cogan, 800 under Raymond, and 3000 under Strongbow.

together. Such an outrage Diarmuid was not likely to forget, and would be likely to avenge. Negotiations were opened, the citizens' representative being the Archbishop of Dublin, Laurence O'Toole; Diarmuid's representative being Maurice Regan.[1] But while the terms of surrender were being settled, two parties of the English, one under Milo De Cogan and the other under Raymond, "eager for fight and greedy of plunder," forced their way into the city and put many persons to death. Strongbow and Diarmuid with their forces soon followed, while the Danish ruler of the city and many with him escaped to their ships.[2] Once again Dublin was in Diarmuid's hands; but not content with all he had done, he made an irruption into Meath and plundered and wasted the territory of O'Rorke. Roderick O'Connor reminded him that his conduct in this and other matters was in direct violation of his promises, and that if he did not desist he would put to death his son, whom he held as a hostage. Diarmuid's reply was that he meditated conquering Connaught, as he had already conquered Leinster; and immediately Roderick put the young prince to death.[3] What retaliatory measures Diarmuid would have taken it is impossible to say; the time was not given him, for in the winter of that year he died at his castle at Ferns. His enemies declared that he died of a loathsome disease, but others say that his end was peaceful and his death that of a repentant Christian; his secretary merely records that he died.[4]

Since his arrival at Waterford everything had prospered with Strongbow. After Diarmuid's death, by the double right of inheritance and conquest, all Leinster was his; *de jure* as well as *de facto* he was its king though he did not assume the title; he divided its lands among his followers, nor did there

[1] *Hibernica*, p. 26. Regan says nothing about Laurence O'Toole, while Giraldus makes no mention of Maurice Regan (pp. 213-14).

[2] Cambrensis, p. 214. The author says they sailed to the "northern islands" to seek aid from their kindred there.

[3] *Ibid.* p. 215. The *Four Masters* says he was "heir-apparent of Leinster."

[4] *Hibernica*, p. 26; *Four Masters* and *Annals of Clonmacnoise*. Vide *Four Masters*, 1182, note.

seem to be anything to oppose his becoming master of all Ireland, as he was already master of Leinster. These fair prospects were soon darkened, and the gathering clouds on the horizon indicated that a storm was near. At Diarmuid's death hardly any of the Leinster chiefs would recognize Strongbow as his successor, nor acquiesce in the arrangement by which the succession was transmitted, especially as it was transmitted to a stranger.[1] The trouble from Henry II. of England was even more to be feared. For Strongbow and his knights to acquire estates in Ireland he had no objection, but the rapidity and extent of their success alarmed him; he was intensely jealous, wished to grasp all power in his own hands, and viewed with disfavour and even with anger the prospect of one of his subjects setting up in Ireland a kingdom, which one day might be a menace to his throne. Immediately he proclaimed that no ship sailing from any part of his dominions should carry anything to Ireland, and that all his subjects in that kingdom should return before the next Easter, on pain of forfeiting their lands and being banished for ever from his kingdom.[2] Nor was this all. The Irish chiefs had for the moment suspended their quarrels; from all quarters they had come together, seeing the danger with which they were threatened, and under the supreme command of the Ardri—Roderick—30,000 fighting men were marshalled round the walls of Dublin. To make Strongbow's position more hopeless still, the Irish had applied for aid to Godred, King of Man; the appeal had been hearkened to, and Godred with thirty ships had already cast anchor at the mouth of the Liffey, blockaded the city from the sea, and thus were the invaders effectually besieged both by sea and land. It was said that this formidable attack had been organized by the Archbishop of Dublin,[3] and it is not unlikely. From personal contact he had been able to appreciate the character of the Anglo-Normans; he had seen how they had butchered his people and robbed them of their property; they were besides of an alien race; the Archbishop was intensely Irish—he was

[1] *Hibernica*, pp. 26-27. [2] Cambrensis, p. 216.
[3] *Ibid.* p. 221. On this subject Regan is silent.

son of the chieftain of Imaal, and he wished that his own race would remain masters in their own land.

Strongbow's position became desperate. After two months his provisions began to fail; there was such scarcity that a measure of wheat was sold for a mark, and a measure of barley for a half mark; only fifteen days' provisions remained, and, calling a council of his chief men, it was determined to send the Archbishop to the Ardri to negotiate terms. If the siege were raised, Strongbow offered to become Roderick's vassal and to hold Leinster from him as from his superior lord and king. But the Ardri scouted such terms, told Strongbow that he should quit Leinster, surrender the towns of Dublin, Waterford, and Wexford, and by a certain day, which he named, that all the English should leave Ireland and go back to their own country; otherwise he would make an assault on Dublin and carry it by force.[1] And an enterprising leader with such an army as he had could have made a breach in the walls and carried the city by assault, or he could have waited and starved out the garrison. But it has often been the melancholy fate of Ireland to have a leader without the capacity to lead, and never had she one so unfit for his position as Roderick O'Connor. He had inherited the name but not the courage of his ancestors. Vain, frivolous, weak-minded, unable to form a decision or to carry it out when formed, he spent his time round Dublin reviewing his troops, indulging in childish display; and such little conception of a commander's duties had he that he placed no sentinels on guard to warn the army of a possible attack. Inside the city there was no such carelessness or irresolution. Roderick's answer presented but two courses to them—either to abandon everything their swords had won, or to sally forth from the city and attack their assailants. To delay was to starve, for their provisions were failing fast. It seemed madness for so small a force to attack so large an army, but often the boldest and most hazardous course is the safest; at the worst they could die, and they knew how to die like men. Leaving behind them their Irish allies, whom they distrusted, and also a small garrison for the city,

[1] *Hibernica*, p. 28.

they formed their whole army into three divisions, two hundred in each—one division under De Cogan, another under Raymond, and the other under Strongbow and Maurice FitzGerald. The whole army thus formed and led fell upon the Irish camp at Finglas.[1] The surprise was great and the victory was complete. The Irish fled, almost without striking a blow; numbers were slain, and Roderick, who was bathing at the time,[2] narrowly escaped with his life, nor would his soldiers have had any reason for regret if he had been pierced by some English lance. The siege was raised, the Irish army melted away, and the English returned to the city laden with booty, and with provisions sufficient to victual the city for a whole year.

While Dublin was besieged, a messenger arrived from Wexford informing Strongbow that Fitzstephen was besieged by the townsmen there and would have to surrender if not aided from Dublin within three days.[3] Strongbow was then unable to aid him—he was in the last extremity himself; but when Roderick O'Connor had been defeated and his army dispersed, the Earl proceeded to Wexford, leaving Dublin with a garrison in charge of Milo De Cogan. On his way south he was attacked at Odrone by O'Ryan, chief of that district; but the English were victorious and arrived safely at Wexford.[4] It was only, however, to find that Fitzstephen and his garrison had been overpowered, that Fitzstephen was a prisoner, and Strongbow was warned that if he attacked the town they would send him out Fitzstephen's head. Leaving Wexford unmolested, he passed on to Waterford, where he was visited by O'Brien of Thomond, who proposed to him to unite their forces and attack the King of Ossory. The Earl agreed, and he and O'Brien were soon at the head of 2000 men, prepared to overrun Ossory. Its king, Donogh, desired an interview,

[1] *Hibernica*, p. 29. This is only 600 out of nearly 5000 at the capture of Dublin. Where were the remainder? Some perhaps had returned to England, some had been left to garrison the city, and some perhaps to overawe the Irish allies and to protect the city against a fresh attack of Godred of Man, who menaced the place from his ships.

[2] Cambrensis, p. 224.

[3] *Ibid.* p. 222.

[4] *Hibernica*, p. 30.

believing he could satisfy Strongbow, and Maurice De Prendergast [1] was despatched to afford Donogh a safe-conduct coming to the camp and returning. When he arrived, both Strongbow and O'Brien began to upbraid him, charged him with many treasons, and seemed on the point of putting him to death. Immediately Maurice De Prendergast mounted his horse, bade his own company to do the same, reminded the Earl and O'Brien that they had promised safe-conduct to the King of Ossory, that they dishonoured themselves in breaking their promises, and swore by the Cross that he would allow no man to lay hands on Donogh, and he took the precaution of never leaving him until he was safely back in Ossory. While they were yet meditating the invasion of Ossory and making all necessary preparations for it, a peremptory mandate reached Strongbow that he was to proceed to England without delay, for the King must get an explanation of his conduct. He had already sent Raymond Le Gros to the King,[2] assuring him that all he possessed in Ireland he was willing to hold at the King's free disposal. A second messenger had been sent in the person of Mountmaurice, but the King was yet unsatisfied ; the mandate to Strongbow was not to be disregarded, and, relinquishing for the time his expedition against Ossory, he at once proceeded to England.[3]

In his absence (1171) Dublin was again attacked. The Danes had long been rulers of the city ; its advantageous position for trade and commerce made it one of their most valued possessions, nor was it likely they would abandon it without a struggle. When it was captured by the English, Hasculf MacTurkill sailed away to his kindred, seeking for aid, as in other days Sitric had sought for aid against Brian Boru. From the Isle of Man and the isles of Scotland, and from Norway—especially from Norway—they came, under a terrible warrior, John the Dane ; and when Hasculf again

[1] *Hibernica*, pp. 31-32. This was the same Maurice who once fought with Ossory and against Diarmuid. After leaving Ireland he had made his way to Strongbow, and was with him when he landed at Waterford.

[2] Cambrensis, pp. 216-17. [3] *Hibernica*, p. 33.

appeared in the Liffey he had a fleet of sixty vessels and an army of 10,000 men. De Cogan's army was small, not more than 600 men in all, but they were the best of soldiers; they were skilfully led, and such was their confidence in themselves that Milo De Cogan himself, with only 300 men, issued out of one of the gates of the city to meet the enemy's attack. He was driven back with the loss of some of his men. Milo's brother Richard had been ordered with 300 horsemen to issue from a different gate, and just as the Danes were impetuously pursuing Milo's troops, these horsemen rode furiously amongst them, trampled and cut them down, broke and disordered their ranks, and drove them in headlong flight into the city.[1] In the work of slaughter the English had been aided by some Irish troops, and so great was the loss of the enemy that not more than 2000 escaped to their ships. Among the prisoners taken was Hasculf MacTurkill himself. When he was brought before De Cogan, his attitude was not that of submission or defeat, for he told his conqueror that if life were spared him he would come again with a more formidable army.[2] Milo's answer was to strike off his head, and thus perished the intrepid Dane, the last Danish ruler of Dublin.

[1] *Hibernica*, pp. 34-36. [2] Cambrensis, p. 220.

CHAPTER XIV

Henry II. in Ireland

HENRY II. was the first English king who came to Ireland; but he was not the first English king who had intended to come, for it has been said that William the Conqueror himself seriously proposed the conquest of Ireland, and that if he had lived but two years longer he would have conquered it; and it is added, that he would have done so without any armament.[1] When Henry came, in 1171, he had been already seventeen years on the English throne, but he had long meditated coming to Ireland. The very year and month (December 1154) in which he became king, an Englishman—the only one who has ever become Pope—ascended the Papal throne. His name was Nicholas Breakspeare; his title as Pope was Adrian IV. The young King sent an embassy to congratulate the new Pope, and these royal messengers—the bishops of Evreux, Lisieux and Le Mans, and the Abbot of St. Albans[2]—were instructed to say, amongst many other things, that the state of Ireland—religious and moral—was deplorable, that their master, Henry, was willing to undertake its reformation, but as an obedient child of the Church he required the Pope's permission and blessing. The efforts of Henry's messengers were seconded by John of Salisbury,[3] who was an intimate personal friend of Adrian, and who, in his book the *Metalogicus*, claims the whole credit for what followed. The Pope acceded to Henry's wishes, and issued the following Bull or Privilege, for it was called by both names :—

[1] *The Normans*, p. 343 (quotation from Wace). It is a pity that Master Wace did not say how this could be done, and by what secret the Conqueror would have charmed the Irish into submission.

[2] *Adrian IV. and Ireland* (Malone), p. 14.

[3] He was a scholar of eminence, and afterwards Bishop of Chartres.

"Adrian, Bishop, servant of the servants of God, to his dearest Son in Christ, the illustrious King of England, greeting and apostolical benediction.

"Your Majesty quite laudably and profitably considers how to extend the glory of your name on earth and increase the reward of eternal happiness in Heaven, when, as a Catholic Prince, you propose to extend the limits of the Church, to announce the truth of the Christian faith to ignorant and barbarous nations, and to root out the weeds of vice from the field of the Lord; and the more effectually to accomplish this you implore the counsel and favour of the Apostolic See. In which matter we are confident that the higher your aim and the greater the discretion with which you proceed, the happier, with God's help, will be your success; because these things that originate in the ardour of faith and the love of religion are always wont to arrive at a good issue and end. Certainly Ireland and all the islands on which Christ, the Sun of Justice, has shone, and which have accepted the doctrines of the Christian faith, of right belong, as your Highness doth acknowledge, to Blessed Peter and the Holy Roman Church. Wherefore we the more willingly sow in them a faithful plantation and a seed pleasing to God, inasmuch as we know by internal examination that it will be strictly required of us. You have signified to us, dearest son in Christ, that you desire to enter the island of Ireland to subject that people to laws and to root out therefrom the weeds of vice, also that you desire to pay from every house an annual pension of one penny to Blessed Peter, and to preserve the rights of the churches of that land inviolate and whole. We, therefore, regarding with due favour your pious and laudable desire, and according a gracious assent to your petition, deem it pleasing and acceptable that for the purpose of extending the limits of the Church, checking the torrent of wickedness, reforming evil manners, sowing seeds of virtue, and increasing the Christian religion, you should enter that island and execute whatever shall be conducive to the honour of God and the salvation of that land. And let the people of that land receive you honourably and reverence you

as lord, the rights of the churches remaining indisputably inviolate and whole, and the annual pension of one penny from every house being reserved to Blessed Peter and the Holy Roman Church. If, therefore, you will carry to completion what with a mind so disposed you have conceived, study to form the people to good morals, and as well by yourself as by those whom you shall find qualified for the purpose, by faith, word and conduct so act, that the Church may be adorned, that the religion of the Christian Faith may be planted and may increase; and let all that concerns the honour of God and the salvation of souls be ordered in such manner, that you may deserve to obtain from God a plentiful everlasting reward, and on earth succeed in acquiring a name glorious for ages."[1]

Before an assembly, made up of the King and of the nobles and clergy, held at Winchester, the Pope's letter was read and approved of, and Henry would have proceeded to Ireland at once, but his mother had some misgivings in the matter; she counselled him not to go, and, in accordance with her wishes, the intended expedition to Ireland was postponed.[2] The King's mother died; but his troubled reign offered a continuous series of subjects for the exercise of his activity and ambition, and amid these distracting cares Ireland and her ills were forgotten. The invitation of MacMurrogh, nearly twenty years later, revived Henry's interest in Irish affairs, and reawakened his ambition; and the Bull, which had slept peacefully for so many years among the archives at Winchester, was again remembered. But Adrian was then dead, an Englishman no

[1] Cambrensis, pp. 260-62; Ginnell, *The Doubtful Grant of Ireland*, pp. 14 and 15. The original document in Latin may be seen in Usher's *Sylloge*, No. 46. The translation given here is from Ginnell. It is more literal and more accurate than that given by the translator of Giraldus. Ginnell's small volume, and another by the Very Rev. S. Malone, *Pope Adrian IV. and Ireland*, are recent publications, and, from opposite standpoints, are entirely concerned with the authenticity of Adrian's Bull. Both works give evidence of much research and learning; both are combative and dogmatic in tone; the authors seem to have made up their minds in advance, and the conviction is borne upon the reader that it is the advocate rather than the historian who speaks.

[2] Usher's *Sylloge*.

longer sat on the Papal throne, and a Pope reigned—Alexander III. — who, perhaps, would look with greater suspicion on Henry, and listen with less complacency to his appeals. Besides, he had become better and less favourably known at Rome. His long and bitter struggle to coerce the Church in England and make it an obedient instrument of his will had ended tragically, and Henry's hands, in the estimation of most men, had been reddened with the blood of Thomas à Beckett. To use Adrian's Bull in such circumstances would not be regular, and when Henry went to Ireland he did not use it—for, according to the jurisprudence of the times, a Papal Bull became null and void in the hands of the receiver when the guilt of murder supervened. But Henry soon cleared himself to the satisfaction of the Papal Legates of complicity in Beckett's murder ;[1] and to show his good wishes for the Church, he abandoned many points for which against the Church and its ministers in England he had struggled tenaciously and long.[2] He even did public penance at Beckett's tomb for his seeming incitement to the murder ;[3] he appeared a penitent and humbled king, and as such he again approached the Papal throne and obtained from Alexander III. (1172) a renewal of the grant of Adrian, in a confirmatory Papal Bull.

For centuries no doubt seems to have arisen as to the authenticity of Adrian's Bull, but in the seventeenth century two Irish writers—Stephen White[4] and John Lynch[5]—attacked it as spurious, and the subject has often been debated since with ability and learning, often also with acrimony and partisan zeal. It has been maintained that the grounds on which Adrian

[1] Lingard's *History of England*, vol. ii. p. 96. It was to meet these Legates that Henry had to leave Ireland so soon and hasten to Normandy.

[2] *Ibid.* He agreed to allow appeals in cases of persons suspected by himself, and he abolished all customs introduced in his reign which were derogatory to the liberties of the clergy.

[3] The date of his doing penance was 1174, two years after Alexander's Letter.

[4] He was a Jesuit, and highly esteemed by Usher (Ware's *Writers* [Harris], vol. ii. p. 103).

[5] Lynch was the author of the well-known *Cambrensis Eversus.*

rested his right to transfer the dominion of Ireland—the donation of Constantine—did not exist, as the donation was discovered to have been a forgery; that the Irish Church stood in no need of reform, the work of reform having been already effected by Malachy and his contemporaries;[1] that the Synod of Cashel (1172), held under the auspices of Henry, did not exhibit any great laxity of morals, or any errors of faith; and that the state of religion in Ireland, as there disclosed, could have been favourably compared with the state of religion in Wales as described by Giraldus himself. It is asked in astonishment, How could the Pope hand over Ireland to a stranger, without hearing its representatives in its defence? Much is made of the fact that the chief authority in favour of the Bull is Giraldus, who, as a historian, is utterly devoid of character, and rarely deserving of credence—and a strong argument on the same side is, that no copy of the Bull in existence bears either date or signature. These reasons are weighty, and give rise to serious misgivings; but they are not entirely conclusive, and the grounds are many for holding that the Bull was actually issued.

That the donation of Constantine was discovered to be a forgery is of little importance, for it was believed in during the twelfth century and after, acted upon by Popes, and acquiesced in by the people. The case of Ireland presents special difficulty, for Constantine never had any dominion over it, and what he never had he could not have transferred. But it is not necessary that Adrian's act should stand or fall by this supposed donation. It was well recognized in the Middle Ages that the Pope could transfer the dominion of Christian States. The rulers of these States were half elective, half hereditary, and held their power as Christian rulers and for the good of the Christian religion. The conviction was deep-seated in the minds of Catholics that supreme power could not be given to any except a Catholic, that in the implied

[1] Not certainly by Malachy, for it appears from the *Four Masters* that at the Synod of Drogheda, or Kells (1152), a decree had to be passed that men were to put away concubines. Mr. Moore thinks this refers to the clergy, though it is not expressly stated (O'Donovan's Note).

contract between princes and people there was a condition that the people should faithfully obey their prince so long as he remained a Catholic, but that a heretical prince had no claim on their allegiance. And it was considered to be the privilege, and even the duty, of the Pope to declare how long a ruler had been faithful to his obligations and his oaths, and when he had forfeited his right to rule.[1] Such extraordinary power, so foreign to modern ideas and practices, was not considered strange in the twelfth century, and had often been exercised. The age was one of violence and lawlessness, the Holy See alone was a centre of religion and refinement, and it was well that, by the consent of all, such a power existed, which could be invoked by the subject against the oppression of his ruler, and by the ruler against the encroachments of an aspiring neighbour or the turbulence of a rebellious vassal.[2] Nor was the right of Adrian to grant Ireland to Henry II. disputed by the Irish themselves,[3] or even its justice called in question, until the lapse of a century and a half. And if we place ourselves in the twelfth century, and try to realize the condition of Ireland then, and the position of Henry, we shall more readily admit that the Pope was not much to blame.

A long and wearisome period of 140 years had passed since, in the moment of victory, Brian Boru and most of his family had fallen at Clontarf. Some confusion might have been expected to arise as to the succession, especially as the Dalcassian dynasty had been but lately established, and its claim to pre-eminence rested on force rather than on descent. But it might have been also expected that out of chaos order would have arisen, and that among the different contending families some one would have emerged from the struggle triumphant

[1] Gosselin, *Power of the Popes in the Middle Ages*, vol. ii. p. 9. Sometimes the condition that a ruler should be a Catholic was an express provision of Constitutional Law (Gosselin, pp. 264 *et seq.*).

[2] *Ibid.* vol. ii. p. 58.

[3] King's *Church History of Ireland*, vol. iii., Appendix. Letter from Domhnall O'Neill to the Pope (1318). It is complained that Adrian, as an Englishman, was prejudiced in favour of England, but it is not complained that he *went beyond his rights.*

and supreme, when his rivals had been humiliated and overthrown. Yet age after age went past, and the struggle still continued; when any one of the contending parties reached supremacy, it was but fleeting and transitory, and after a century and a half the struggle was still undecided and maintained. Nor was there the least prospect, at the close of the period, of a central government being established, nor the least hope that the end of the struggle was at hand. Amid the clash of arms religion does not flourish; and the Danish wars and the long era of civil discord which followed had left the Irish Church in the condition described by St. Bernard. With a settled government—the guarantee of peace—the Church would have quickly righted itself, perhaps even renewed its ancient glory, for such men as Gillebert and Celsus, and Malachy and Laurence of Dublin, and Christian of Lismore were earnest and zealous reformers, and were well supported by the other bishops. But, distracted by the tumult of war, their efforts could not be successful. Nor is there much justice in the complaint that Ireland was condemned by the Pope unheard. From Gillebert to Gelasius a series of Papal delegates was continued, whose duty would be to present the true state of Ireland at Rome. Malachy had gone twice to see the reigning Pope, and had had long conversations with him about Ireland; and to the Synod of Kells, Cardinal Paparo had been sent specially from Rome to preside, and in due course had described the condition of Ireland on his return. What further information did the Pope require, or from whom could he have received it? Not from the mass of the people, for they were merely instruments in the hands of turbulent chiefs, who recklessly spilt their clansmen's blood as they recklessly spilt their own. As to the chiefs themselves, they could not have been influenced for good. Some, perhaps, could not have given up war because, having been attacked, they were bound to defend themselves. Others would not be at peace; they would neither do good themselves nor allow others to do it.[1] In such

[1] In the *Four Masters* proof of this statement is found on every page. *Vide* also Malone, *Pope Adrian IV. and Ireland*, pp. 9, 10.

circumstances the Pope, in the interest of Ireland itself, looked for a master and a remedy from without, seeing that it was useless to hope for either from within.

To reform the Irish Church, or any church, Henry II. would appear to have been a bad selection. A cardinal, after a long interview with him, declared that he had never met so audacious a liar;[1] and his own son Richard once said to his advisers, that in his family the custom was for the son to hate the father—that the whole family had come from the devil, and to the devil they should return.[2] "He could," says Giraldus, "scarcely spare an hour to hear Mass, and then he was more occupied in counsels and conversation about affairs of state than in his devotions." And he adds that he seized on the revenues of the Church and gave the money to his soldiers.[3] But this was Henry at a later stage of his career, and not when he applied for and obtained Adrian's Bull. He was then but twenty-one years of age, active, energetic, ambitious, swayed, it might easily be thought, by the generous impulses of youth; and if it were his high purpose to restore peace to a distracted land, and prosperity to a Church that had fallen from its high estate, was it for Adrian to doubt his zeal or to question whether he was sincere? Henry had come of a race with many faults, it is true, but with many virtues as well—autocratic, insolent, overbearing, yet generous and helpful to the Church; and the contrast presented by a contemporary writer between the state of religion in England in Saxon and in Norman times shows that the Church had prospered under Norman rule. "In process of time," says William of Malmesbury, "the desire after literature and religion had decayed for several years before the arrival of the Normans. The clergy could scarcely stammer out the words of the Sacraments, and a person who understood grammar was an object of wonder and astonishment."[4] Of the Normans he has many hard things to say; but he adds that, nevertheless, they revived the observances of religion, that churches rose in

[1] Gilbert, *The Viceroys of Ireland*, p. 25.
[2] *Ibid.* p. 26. [3] Cambrensis, p. 252.
[4] *William of Malmesbury's Chronicle*, p. 279.

every village and monasteries in towns and cities, that the country flourished with renovated rites, and that each wealthy man thought his day lost which he had not signalized by some magnificent action.[1] Might not similar results follow in Ireland? To stop the raids and forays of the chiefs, to preserve the monasteries from outrage and the churches from sacrilege, to allow the bishops to hold their synods[2] and to aid in carrying out their decrees—this was all that was required for the Church's prosperity, and all this could be guaranteed under the rule of a monarch so powerful as Henry II. Adrian IV. had been educated at Paris under an Irish monk, Marianus of Ratisbon;[3] he must have also met many other Irish scholars, men of sanctity and zeal—he must have often heard them lament the distracted state of their country, and to him, as an Englishman, it would have been a just cause of pride that peace had been brought to the Irish Church under an English-born Pope and by the aid of an English king. Nor is there much force in the objection that Henry proved to be the enemy of the Church instead of its friend, and that his coming to Ireland had been the cause of evil instead of good. All this the Pope did not foresee; he was only human and could not have read the secrets of the future.

It is unfortunate, though not fatal to Adrian's Bull, that no copy bears date or signature. Many public and important documents have suffered as much, many have perished altogether. State papers were not so carefully guarded in the twelfth century as they are now, and there was no reason why Adrian's Bull should be preserved with special care. As time passed, it was seen at Rome that the Anglo-Norman invasion, instead of proving a blessing to Ireland, had only added to its ills; and when the English broke away from the Church of Rome, they desired to forget that an English king had ever gone

[1] *William of Malmesbury's Chronicle*, p. 280.

[2] That they were not allowed to do so sometimes, appears from the *Four Masters* at the year 1158, for the Connaught bishops who were going to the Synod of Brigh-Mac-Tadgh were set upon by O'Mellaghlin of Meath, two of their retinue killed, and themselves chased across the Shannon, so that they had to return home without attending the Synod.

[3] Lanigan, vol. iv. p. 155.

a-begging to the Pope. It is not necessary to believe that the original document had been wilfully destroyed, but neither at Rome nor at London was there any desire that it should be remembered.[1]

It was in 1171, on the 18th of October, that Henry II. landed at Waterford. His army had been transported in 400 vessels, and numbered 500 knights and 4000 soldiers, horse and foot.[2] When the number of attendants on these is taken into account, the whole force reached little less than 10,000 men. With him was Strongbow. When he crossed over from Ireland, earlier in the year, he found the King at Newnham in Gloucestershire. His reception was cold—Henry was even menacing; but he was disarmed by the humility and submissiveness of Strongbow, who laid at his feet—even made over to him in writing—everything he possessed in Ireland, whether in right of his wife or by the sword, allowed him to place royal garrisons in all his castles, and did homage to him for Leinster. At last, says Giraldus, the storm subsided, "and though the mutterings of the thunder were loud, the deadly bolt did not fall."[3] A wealthy and powerful lord at Waterford attempted to prevent the landing of the royal army, and stretched across the harbour three massive iron chains; but these were broken through, the whole army disembarked, and

[1] Adrian's Bull was evidently in existence when Alexander III. issued (1172) his confirmatory Letter, unless, indeed, we hold, as does Lynch (*Cambrensis Eversus*, cap. 24), that this document also is forged; and when Pope John XXII. wrote to Edward II. (1318), in answer to the remonstrance of Domhnall O'Neill, he sent him a copy of Adrian's Bull (King's *Church History of Ireland*, vol. iii., Appendix).

Lynch (*Cam. Eversus*, caps. 23-24, vol. ii.) strongly, even vehemently, holds that Adrian's Bull is a forgery; his Translator and Editor (Dr. Kelly) holds the opposite view. *Vide* also Lanigan, vol. iv. pp. 158 *et seq.*; and *Macariae Excidium*, pp. 242 *et seq.* These two latter works believe the Bull to be genuine. Perhaps the most damaging attack made upon it has come from Professor Thatcher of the University of Chicago (*Studies concerning Adrian IV.*, Chicago, 1903). Master of much learning, he skilfully marshals his arguments and makes a case against the Bull which is hard to answer.

[2] *Hibernica*, p. 36.

[3] Cambrensis, p. 228; Ware's *Annals*.

this lord—Reginald MacGillemory—was taken and hanged, and the natives, with but few exceptions, expelled from the town.[1]

Against so numerous an army the most complete unanimity among the Irish chiefs, marshalled and directed by one leader of the highest ability, would be required. Nor was it likely that even such union and leadership would have prevailed, for superiority of numbers on the Irish side would have been more than counterbalanced by superiority of arms and discipline on the side of the English. But there was among the Irish chiefs no such unanimity, and the incapacity, and even cowardice, of Roderick O'Connor had been already so well established, that no national army would enthusiastically, or even willingly have served under his command. Each prince, therefore, had to depend on the resources of his own territory; and thus unequally matched against Henry, their only course was to tender him their submission. At Waterford, Diarmuid MacCarthy, King of Desmond, submitted: and at Cashel, whither Henry had marched by way of Lismore, O'Brien of Thomond tendered his submission. Passing on to Waterford, without much further delay, the English king proceeded through Ossory to Dublin, receiving on his way the submission of Magillapatrick of Ossory, and of O'Faelain, chief of the Deisi; their example was followed at Dublin by O'Rorke of Brefny and O'Carroll of Oriel, and by several of the lesser chiefs.[2] Roderick O'Connor was as helpless as those who had submitted, but though his power was gone, his pride and vanity remained, and though he was ready to submit, he would not do so in person. Henry despatched two of his knights—Hugh De Lacy and William FitzAdelm—to treat with him; they met him on the banks of the Shannon and received from him an acknowledgment of their master's supremacy.[3] The princes of the North alone—perhaps finding some safety in their distance from Dublin—scorned to submit to a foreigner, and tenaciously and courageously clung to their

[1] Gilbert's *Viceroys*, p. 25.
[2] Cambrensis, pp. 230-31; Ware's *Annals*
[3] *The O'Conors of Connaught*, pp. 66-67.

ancient freedom. Even these Henry expected to subdue, and perhaps without the employment of force. In war he was experienced and skilful, but he preferred to attain his ends by peaceful means;[1] and in Ireland his crafty policy was to conquer rather by kindness than by force. He loved to pose as the protector of the people and the avenger of their wrongs, and when the inhabitants of Wexford brought to him at Waterford their prisoner Fitzstephen, and complained of all the evils he had done them, Henry loaded him with chains, and, tying him to another prisoner, had him cast into Reginald's Tower, though he took care soon after to set him free.[2]

In Dublin—in that part of it now occupied by the south side of Dame Street—in a large palace built of peeled osiers, Henry spent the winter of 1171 and the spring of the following year. To the sumptuous banquets which Norman luxury loved and Norman cooks were able to prepare—the flesh of cranes, peacocks, herons, swans and wild geese[3]—he invited the native chiefs, all of whom he took every pains to conciliate and even flatter, and all of whom went away marvelling at the number and splendour of his retinue, at the wealth and luxury displayed, and marvelling no less at the condescension of a king who was then one of the mightiest potentates of the earth. From the chiefs, whom he had thus favourably impressed, Henry turned his attention to the bishops, whose good-will he was most anxious to obtain. The Bull of Adrian had been obtained so that he might reform the Irish Church, and unless he wished to be stigmatized as a hypocrite, he was bound to give some evidence of reforming zeal. By his directions a Synod was held at Cashel (1172), at which Henry was represented by Ralph, Archdeacon of Llandaff, Nicholas, his chaplain, and another Ralph, "Abbot of Buildewas." The President was the Papal Legate, Christian, Bishop of Lismore, and besides these were Laurence O'Toole of Dublin, Catholicus, Archbishop of Tuam, and the other bishops of Munster, Leinster and Connaught,[4] except Gelasius, but the Northern bishops held

[1] Cambrensis, p. 251.
[2] *Ibid.* p. 229; Ware's *Annals.*
[3] Gilbert's *Viceroys*, pp. 27-28.
[4] Cambrensis, pp. 232-4.

aloof.[1] Following the lead of their chiefs, the bishops accepted Henry as their lord, and some decrees which they passed in reference to Church discipline were, it seems, sent to Rome, and demonstrated Henry's zeal so satisfactorily that he soon after obtained the letter of Alexander III., confirmatory of Adrian's Bull. His progress so far had been a triumphal one. He had impressed all most favourably—the chiefs by his condescension and hospitality, the Church by his zeal—and he stood out in marked and favourable contrast to those rapacious freebooters who had come over with Strongbow. Without striking a blow, three-fourths of the country had submitted to him, and it seemed likely that the chiefs of Tirconnell and Tirowen would not hold out long, but, on the contrary, would follow the lead given them by the other provinces. All this Henry could not wait to see, for urgent messages came from England that the Pope had excommunicated him for his share in the murder of Thomas à Beckett, and that two cardinals—Albert and Theotimus—had been sent from Rome to place his dominions under interdict.[2] This was serious news, and Henry was compelled to abandon his further designs in Ireland, and to hurry with all speed to Normandy, to meet the legates and free himself from the crime laid to his charge. Leaving Dublin, he first proceeded to Waterford, and thence went to Wexford, from which port he set sail.

In leaving Ireland, Henry placed Waterford in charge of Robert FitzBernard, with whom he associated, in the government of the place, Humphrey Bohun and Hugh De Gandevill. In Wexford he appointed Philip De Braos, with William FitzAdelm and Philip De Hastings as his assistants ; and at Dublin was Hugh De Lacy, assisted by Robert Fitzstephen and Maurice FitzGerald.[3] Hugh De Lacy was the King's special representative, charged with the general supervision of the King's interests, and he is usually put down as the first Viceroy.[4] Dublin by royal charter was given to the people of Bristol ;[5]

[1] Lanigan, vol. iv. pp. 204-5.
[2] Cambrensis, pp. 236-7.
[3] Ware's *Annals*.
[4] Harris's *Ware*, vol. ii. p. 102.
[5] *Historic and Municipal Documents* (Gilbert), p. 1. Henry II. also granted another charter to these colonists from Bristol, granting them freedom from certain imposts throughout his dominions (*ibid.* p. 2).

it was inhabited by people from that city, and the old inhabitants were either entirely or for the most part expelled, as had been already done at Waterford,[1] and perhaps also at Wexford. These three cities were garrisoned by the King's soldiers; within their walls English law was established, English customs existed, and Henry's authority was amply recognized. Strongbow held Leinster from him as a fief, but outside Leinster and the cities named the King's power was but little, for the submission of the Irish chiefs did not go far. They acknowledged Henry as they would a powerful Ardri. They paid him some small tribute; they would in case of a grave dispute have accepted his arbitrament and have peacefully acquiesced in his ruling, at least as long as he could overawe them by superior force; but in all other respects they were free. Their manners and customs and laws, their division of classes and offices, the title to their lands, the constitution and privileges of their septs and clans, these were left unchanged; and if Thomond and Desmond and Meath were fiefs of Henry II., in each of them it was the Brehon and not the Feudal law which prevailed. It was on these conditions the Irish chiefs submitted, and under these conditions their submission had been received; yet in defiance of these contracts Henry, before his departure, gave Leinster to Strongbow, Meath to De Lacy, and Ulster, over which he had acquired no authority whatever, to John De Courcy. To Leinster Strongbow might be allowed a title as the heir and successor of Diarmuid MacMurrogh, to which had been superadded the right of conquest and to some extent of effective occupation. But O'Rorke was still supreme in Meath and Brefny, though acknowledging the supremacy of Henry; while in Ulster there had been no transference of power whatever, either by conquest or by voluntary submission. These conflicting interests would be certain to produce war. The Anglo-Norman chiefs would try to establish themselves in those provinces so unjustly

[1] At a subsequent date Henry II. granted Waterford to the Danes, admitting them to the full right of English subjects, and this, no doubt, because he could not get sufficient English to settle there (Leland's *History of Ireland*, vol. i. p. 82—Copy of Charter of Edward I.).

handed over to them by their royal master, the Irish chiefs were not likely to surrender what was theirs, and there seemed no possible mode in which, while maintaining peace, these conflicting rights could be reconciled. Nor was the prospect of such war displeasing to Henry II. It would weaken the Irish princes and make their ultimate conquest all the easier for him and his successors; nor would there be any danger while several Anglo-Norman chiefs were separately engaged, each in his own province, each independent of the others, that any one would become so powerful that he could throw off his allegiance to England and set up a powerful Irish monarchy.

The trouble began in Meath, and in a dispute between Hugh De Lacy and O'Rorke. The point in dispute is not clear. Thirty years before (1144), the ancient kingdom of Meath had been divided into three parts by Turlogh O'Connor, and one of these parts had been assigned to O'Rorke. In the interval he had defended this acquisition, perhaps even extended its limits. To this territory, or portion of it, De Lacy laid claim in accordance with Henry's concession. O'Rorke refused to surrender what he believed to be his; but a friendly conference was arranged between the disputants, and they met at Tlachta, near Athboy. During the progress of the negotiations a quarrel arose, blows were exchanged, one of De Lacy's attendants—his interpreter—was slain, and as O'Rorke was mounting his horse to escape from the danger that threatened him, an English horseman rode up and transfixed him with a spear. The Irish chroniclers maintain that the treachery was all on the English side; Giraldus, on the other side, has no doubt whatever that it was on the Irish side, and speaks with bitterness of the treachery and treason of O'Rorke, "the one-eyed King of Meath." The body of O'Rorke was taken to Dublin, the head cut off and placed over the gate of the fortress, and the body gibbeted with the feet upwards, at the northern side of Dublin.[1] The example of De Lacy in Meath was quickly followed by Strongbow in Leinster. He had conquered only part of the province, and the concession of the whole province by the English king had not

[1] *Four Masters*; Cambrensis, pp. 242-4.

brought with it the peaceful submission of the native chiefs or the acquiescence of the people, and there were still many of these Leinster chiefs who clung with tenacity and determination to their ancient freedom. Against one of these, O'Dempsey of Offaly, Strongbow marched with a thousand men ; and unable to resist such an army, O'Dempsey[1] fell back. Strongbow, after wasting and plundering Offaly, or at least O'Dempsey's portion, was returning to his headquarters at Kildare, when, at a narrow pass, his rear-guard, under his son-in-law De Quincy, was attacked by O'Dempsey and driven into Kildare in confusion, with the loss of its leader and many others. Defeated, but not materially weakened, Strongbow was meditating a fresh expedition, when he was summoned by Henry II. to England. His aid was required in his French wars, and so well pleased was Henry with the services of the Earl, that he appointed him to guard the strong fortress of Gisers in Normandy (1173) ; and after a short time sent him back in the same year to Ireland, appointing him Viceroy in room of Hugh De Lacy.[2]

The prospect before the new Viceroy was not encouraging. The native chiefs, no longer awed by the presence of Henry and the overwhelming force at his command, showed a readiness to assert themselves, and the English chiefs began to quarrel. Strongbow's treasury was soon exhausted, the soldiers clamoured for their pay, and not having it to get, they were ready and eager for plunder. The successor of De Quincy in the military command of Leinster was Hervey De Mountmaurice; and as he would not countenance plunder, the soldiers refused to serve under his command, and demanded that Raymond Le Gros be appointed their leader. Necessity forced Strongbow to accede to their request, and Raymond was placed in supreme military command.[3] His measures were energetic and decisive. He ravaged Offaly and plundered Lismore, defeated the Danes of Cork at sea and Diarmuid MacCarthy of Desmond on land, and

[1] Of Offaly : the chief was O'Connor Faly. O'Dempsey only held part of the territory along the east side of the river Barrow, and paid some tribute to O'Connor (*Hibernica*, p. 38).

[2] Gilbert's *Viceroys*, p. 37.

[3] Ware's *Annals*.

safely arrived at Waterford with all his plunder. Then he demanded to be made Constable of Leinster, and he also demanded, and not for the first time, Basilea, Strongbow's sister, in marriage; and as both requests were refused, he left Waterford in disgust and retired to his castle of Carew, in Pembrokeshire,[1] while Mountmaurice resumed military command of the province.

The change of commanders was not fortunate for the invaders. Raymond was a brave soldier and a skilful leader; with the soldiers he was popular, for he had always led them to victory and put no restraint on their plunderings of the Irish. Mountmaurice, on the other hand, was unpopular with the soldiers; his ideas of justice were better than those of Raymond, he was less enterprising and daring, and less skilful as a leader. His first expedition was disastrous. Domhnall O'Brien of Thomond had renounced his allegiance to the English, and Mountmaurice advised Strongbow to lead an army against him. With a large force they were soon on the march; but O'Brien, warned of their approach, came upon them in the early morning, near Thurles, and inflicted on them a crushing defeat, driving them back to Waterford, with the loss of 700 of their troops.[2] Shut up in that city, surrounded by enemies, almost in a state of siege, and with disaffection within the walls itself, Strongbow's position was one of extreme danger. The daring and skilful Raymond was then remembered, and Strongbow sent urgent messages to him to return with all the forces he could muster, and that all he had formerly asked and been refused would now be readily granted. Raymond soon landed at Waterford with nearly 500 troops, liberated Strongbow from the plight in which he was, and both proceeding to Wexford, Raymond was married to Basilea with great pomp and appointed Constable of Leinster.[3] In the meantime the Irish chiefs,

[1] Ware's *Annals*, 1173.

[2] The *Four Masters* makes it 1700. *Vide* Ware's *Annals*. Giraldus (p. 257) allows that O'Brien was "not wanting in ability for one of his nation."

[3] Ware's *Annals*. In the language of the time, Raymond was Constable of Leinster, and had its Banner and Ensign—military and civil authority—subject to Strongbow (*Hibernica*, p. 38, note).

encouraged by the victory of Thurles, had risen in arms against the foreigners. A confederacy had been formed, consisting of O'Neill of Tirowen, O'Mellaghlin of Meath, O'Carroll of Oriel, and MacDunleavy of Uladh, with Roderick O'Connor in supreme command.[1] With an army of 20,000 they had entered Meath, levelled to the earth the Norman castles which De Lacy had built there, cleared the district of the English colonists ; and De Lacy's governor of Trim had demolished the castle there, and had hastened with all speed and with all his forces within the shelter of the walls of Dublin. It was Roderick O'Connor's opportunity, if he could only have used it ; but his imbecility saved the situation, and instead of turning south and finishing what Domhnall O'Brien had commenced, he retraced his steps and returned home to Connaught. He had heard, it appears, that the dreaded Raymond with Strongbow was marching with the troops from Wexford, and not having the courage to confront them even with such superior forces, he declined the contest and went home. These events occurred in the year 1174.

In the next year, Leinster and Meath being safe, Strongbow directed his attention to Limerick, and Raymond, with all the forces he could muster, was directed to march towards Thomond and measure swords with Domhnall O'Brien. He was joined by the King of Ossory, who had an old grudge against O'Brien, and the united forces of Ossory and Raymond were soon before the walls of Limerick. But the difficulty was to cross the Shannon, for they could discover no fordable place. At last one of their number spurred his horse into the river and both horse and man safely reached the other side; a soldier followed, but he was drowned. Meyler FitzHenry plunged into the river and swam across, and then Raymond himself, with the cry of "St. David!" and accompanied by his whole force, got safely to the other side. When they reached the town, O'Brien's men fled. Raymond took possession, and appointing Milo De Cogan its governor, he returned to Wexford.[2]

[1] Ware's *Annals*, 1174.

[2] *Ibid.* 1175. Giraldus (p. 265) on this occasion puts a speech into the mouth of Raymond and gives a very flattering description of him.

Terrified at Raymond's successes, knowing well that he had lost the respect of the Irish chiefs and could not hope for their support if he were attacked, Roderick O'Connor began to tremble for his hereditary kingdom of Connaught, and sent ambassadors to England to negotiate fresh terms with Henry II. These ambassadors were Laurence, Archbishop of Dublin, Catholicus O'Duffy, Archbishop of Tuam, and Concors, Abbot of St. Brendans. They were received at Windsor, where a Council was held and terms between Roderick and Henry were embodied in a document, since called the Treaty of Windsor. Over Meath and Leinster and any other districts held by the English barons, and over the towns and cities garrisoned by Henry's troops, Roderick was to have no further authority; over the Irish kings and princes he was recognized as supreme, but subject to Henry, to whom he was bound to pay an annual tribute of one hide for every ten head of cattle slaughtered in his territory, the same tribute to be paid by the other Irish princes, but through Roderick's hands and not directly from themselves. With these limitations, and subject to these obligations, Roderick was to hold his hereditary kingdom of Connaught, in the same way as he had held it before the arrival of the English, and should any of the Irish princes refuse to recognize him as their superior, or refuse allegiance to Henry, or fail to pay their stipulated tribute, then Henry was to lend his aid in reducing them to submission, or, if Roderick thought necessary, removing them from their position.[1] That same year (1175) Henry sent over William FitzAdelm, and Nicholas, Prior of Wallingford, with the Bull of Adrian IV. and the confirmatory Letter of Alexander, and at a Synod of the Irish clergy held at Waterford, these documents were published in Ireland for the first time.[2] He would have preferred to conquer the country by the sword, and did not wish to be under any obligation to the Church;[3] but his progress had been slow, his

[1] *The O'Conors of Connaught*, pp. 71-72.

[2] Cambrensis, p. 260; Lanigan, vol. iv. pp. 222 *et seq.*

[3] This is given as an explanation, and a not unlikely one, of why the Bull was not published sooner.

power had declined instead of increasing, and by the publication of these documents he wished to enlist the support of the clergy, hoping much from their aid. This assistance, could he obtain it, he expected would be more effective than Raymond's sword, and produce more permanent results than Raymond's victories.

These victories were to Henry a cause of alarm rather than of pleasure. Success breeds jealousy; Raymond's successes had excited the envy of men with less capacity, and they poured into Henry's ear stories of Raymond's ambition and pride.[1] Nor did these stories fail to make an impression. The King began to fear that Raymond was too powerful and might become a danger, and he sent four Commissioners to Ireland with peremptory orders that Raymond was to resign his command and proceed at once to England. He was preparing to obey this command when events occurred which retarded his departure. Domhnall O'Brien had again become active, had laid siege to Limerick, and the army prepared by Strongbow refused to fight, except under the leadership of Raymond. In these circumstances he was given the command and marched south, having been joined on the way by Donogh, King of Ossory. Hearing of their approach, O'Brien raised the siege of Limerick and in a pass near Cashel awaited the advance of the enemy. But Raymond had been forewarned and was not unprepared, and, after an obstinate contest, O'Brien was defeated and retired to his own territories, while Raymond continued his advance and arrived safely at Limerick.[2] It appears he made some terms of peace with O'Brien. In a quarrel between two MacCarthys of Desmond, his aid had been invoked and obtained; the side he espoused had been victorious, and Raymond returned to Limerick, amply rewarded by the successful combatant.[3] Awaiting him was a letter from his wife announcing that her great jaw-tooth had fallen out, and rightly interpreting this to mean that Strongbow was dead, he made terms with Domhnall

[1] Cambrensis, pp. 268-9. This conduct is especially attributed to Mountmaurice.

[2] *Ibid.* p. 270.

[3] Ware's *Annals.*

O'Brien, entrusted him with the custody of Limerick, and with all his troops took his departure for Dublin, where he found that Strongbow was dead. He had only crossed the Shannon when, on looking back, he saw that O'Brien had set fire to Limerick.[1]

Strongbow had requested that he should not be interred until Raymond arrived, and when this happened the Earl was interred in Christ Church (June 1176) with great pomp, the Archbishop of Dublin being present. His death was said by the Irish writers to have been due to an ulcer on the foot, and to have been brought about by the Irish Saints, so many of whose churches he had profaned.[2] The picture of Giraldus[3] does not accord with this and is not without interest. He describes the Earl as a man with a ruddy complexion, freckled skin, grey eyes, feminine features, a weak voice, a short neck, tall of stature, of great generosity and courtesy, ever ready to take advice and rarely relying on his own judgment. He was neither driven to despair in adversity nor puffed up by success. With the consent of the Royal Commissioners, Raymond assumed the government until the King's will should be known, and when it was, William FitzAdelm was appointed Viceroy and Raymond was deprived of all authority, civil and military. He retired to his estates at Wexford and died there (1182). Of all the English leaders he is the hero of Giraldus—he never fails to praise him; but it must be remembered that they were of the same family, and no man was more partial to his own family than Giraldus.[4] This

[1] Cambrensis, p. 272.

[2] *Four Masters.* "He saw, as he thought, St. Bridget in the act of killing him."

[3] Cambrensis, p. 226.

[4] Nearly all those who were leaders of the first Anglo-Norman invaders were related, being descendants of Nesta, daughter of Rhys Ap Tudor, Prince of South Wales. She was at first the mistress of Henry I., by whom she had a son, Henry, from whom are descended the FitzHenrys—Henry, Robert, and Meyler. Discarded by Henry, she married, firstly, Gerald de Windsor of Pembroke, from whom are descended the FitzGeralds and the De Barris, among the former being Maurice and Raymond (Raymond Le Gros, or the Fat, because he was so stout); among the latter were Robert and Philip De Barri and their brother Sylvester (Giraldus Cambrensis), also the De Cogans. Nesta married, secondly, Stephen,

Photo: Lawrence.

STRONGBOW'S TOMB IN CHRIST CHURCH CATHEDRAL, DUBLIN

WITH A FRAGMENT FROM THE TOMB OF EVA, HIS WIFE

knowledge will help us to estimate his praises, as it will help us to understand the invective which he pours so often on the head of Mountmaurice.

Castellan of Abertivy, from whom are the Fitzstephens, etc. The relationship was extended by marriages in Ireland (*vide* Cambrensis, p. 183, Genealogical Table).

CHAPTER XV

Progress of the Invaders

IN the grant of Henry II. to Hugh De Lacy, made before the King left Ireland (1172), he made over to him the whole kingdom of Meath, to be held by the service of fifty knights, and in as ample a manner as it had ever been held by Murrogh O'Mellaghlin, or by any other person before him or after him.[1] The death of O'Rorke left De Lacy in full possession of East Meath, but O'Mellaghlin was still powerful in Westmeath, and his descendants held sway in that district for centuries to come. De Lacy made no attempt to dethrone him; on the contrary, his was one of the five great families who, by virtue of their royal blood, had been admitted to the full rights of English subjects, and had been guaranteed—both themselves and their descendants—the protection of English law.[2] In the whole of East Meath, De Lacy had enormous possessions—all the present county of Meath, Delvin in Westmeath, portion of Dublin, as far as Castleknock and even to Santry and Clontarf, part of Kildare, part of King's County—in those districts over which the Molloys and the O'Caharneys held sway. The area of this extensive and fertile district was no less than 800,000 acres of land.[3] Part of these lands De Lacy reserved for himself, but the greater part he parcelled out among his vassals, who were to hold these lands from him, as he held all Meath from King Henry—by military tenure. Regan has enumerated these grants,[4] or some of them; but the places

[1] Harris's *Ware*, vol. ii. pp. 192-3.

[2] Leland's *History of Ireland*, vol. i. pp. 82-83. These five families, or five bloods, as they have been often called, were O'Neill of Ulster, O'Connor of Connaught, O'Brien of Thomond, O'Mellaghlin of Meath, and MacMurrogh of Leinster.

[3] Gilbert's *Viceroys of Ireland*, pp. 35-36.

[4] *Hibernica*, pp. 42-43.

have not been in every case identified, though some of them have. To his friend Hugh Tyrell he gave Castleknock; to Meyler FitzHenry, Ardnocker in Westmeath; to Jocelin De Nangle, lands round Navan and Ardbrecan; to Adam De Feipo, a district near Santry and Clontarf; to Gilbert De Nugent, Delvin in Westmeath; to De Misset, the lands of Luin in Meath; and to Richard De Fleming, or Richard of Flanders, he gave a large amount of lands in the neighbourhood of Slane. Besides these, he settled in the district and endowed with lands Petit and Gilbert De Nangle, and Robert De Lacy, and Richard De la Chappel and Hugh De Hose and Adam Dullard; and to Richard Tuite, as well as to all these, he gave fair possessions, and no doubt to others also whose names are not recorded. Each of these knights was to build a Norman castle, which would serve as a stronghold and a rallying-point for the settlers, and which with its military defenders would overawe the surrounding natives into submission and quiescence. De Lacy imitated his vassals, and over the wide extent of the lands which he reserved for his own personal use he constructed several strong castles. Thus in strengthening his position and ensuring peace in his province he spent his time, nor is there any reason to think that the position of the natives was worse under their new master than it had been under the rule of O'Rorke or the O'Mellaghlins. It was the policy of De Lacy to impress upon the Irish that he was their master but not their tyrant; he had no sympathy with needlessly harassing them, or robbing them of what was theirs; and it would have been well, both for English and native, if his example had been generally followed.

In the war of 1174 the Meath colonists suffered much, but their sufferings did not last. The tide of invasion receded even more quickly than it had advanced. Roderick O'Connor, who had marched almost to the walls of Dublin, on his return home confined his attention only to his native province; and the Treaty of Windsor, in the following year, debarred him from attacking the province of Meath, or even interfering in its affairs. The colonists returned to their lands, their ruined

castles were repaired and new ones were built, a sense of security and strength succeeded a feeling of uncertainty and alarm, and all would have been well if De Lacy's vassals could only have restrained their propensity for plunder. In this respect a certain knight named Fleming, or Richard De Flanders, was the greatest sinner. As his name indicates, he was one of those Flemish soldiers, of whom there were so many throughout Europe, ready to fight in any cause and under any flag for pay, whose instincts it was to plunder, who respected the strong and had little mercy for the weak. In his strong castle at Slane he kept a body of military adventurers, greedy for war and plunder. From time to time they issued from the castle gates, raided the lands of the surrounding natives, destroyed their property, drove away their cattle, burned their houses, ravished their women, and murdered the people. Such outrages could not long be borne, except by slaves, and the natives had not yet learned to be slaves. In their distress they appealed to the princes of Tirowen and Oriel, and their appeal did not pass unheard, nor their injuries unavenged. These two chieftains entered Meath, attacked the English strongholds, destroyed the castles of Kells, Galtrim and Derrypatrick, wreaked their vengeance on Fleming and Slane Castle, killed every individual within it to the number of 500, and Fleming himself was among the slain.[1] The same year that these events occurred (1176), FitzAdelm De Burgo succeeded Strongbow as Viceroy. Descended from a half-brother of William the Conqueror,[2] he was therefore related to the reigning sovereign, had held important offices under him, and seems to have enjoyed his entire confidence.[3] But he soon became unpopular with his own countrymen: he tried to curb their rapacity; he was specially opposed to Raymond Le Gros and his relatives; and he incurred in consequence the hatred of Giraldus, who describes him as a braggart against the defenceless, a flatterer of the rebellious: "he was a man full of guile, bland and deceitful, much

[1] *Four Masters*, 1176.

[2] Cox, *Hibernia Anglicana*, pp. 31-32. [3] Gilbert's *Viceroys*, p. 42.

given to wine and women—covetous of money and ambitious of Court favour."[1] The Court favour he was able to retain for a time, but he had many and powerful enemies; the unsuccessful invasion of Connaught, which he countenanced, they made good use of with the King—FitzAdelm lost the royal favour, was superseded in his office, and Hugh De Lacy (1178) was appointed Viceroy.

In the same year that he became Viceroy he married a daughter of Roderick O'Connor, and the cry was soon raised by some of the English colonists that he wished to become king. Henry's suspicions and jealousies were aroused; it appears De Lacy had married without obtaining the King's permission, and, perhaps under this pretext, he was dismissed from office, but before the year was out he was again restored.[2] Later still, he was again displaced and his post filled by two Anglo-Normans, John De Lacy and Richard De Peche, who were appointed as joint rulers.[3] They did little except to build a few castles, and in a short time they also were displaced (1181), and once more Hugh De Lacy became Viceroy, having appointed with him as adviser Robert of Salisbury, whose duty, as Giraldus thinks, was to act as a spy on the Viceroy's proceedings and report everything to the King.[4] During the next few years De Lacy built many strong castles throughout Leinster and Meath. Hitherto the greater number of these castles were in Meath; but Leinster as well as Meath was a fief of Henry II.—within its limits his sovereignty must be established and protected, and the Viceroy covered the province with a chain of these fortified castles, which might serve as a menace to the turbulent natives and as a protection for the colonists and for the natives who were peaceably disposed. One of these castles was at New Leighlin in Carlow, one at Idrone, one at Timahoe, one at Castledermot, one at Tullow,

[1] Cambrensis, p. 277. He gets credit for having attacked Armagh and taken away the Bacal Jesu to Christ Church, Dublin; but Lanigan thinks this was done by Philip de Braos in 1184 (vol. iv. p. 241).

[2] Gilbert's *Viceroys*, p. 46.

[3] Harris's *Ware*, vol. ii. p. 102.

[4] Cambrensis, p. 291.

one at Kilkea, and one at Nenagh ; and there were many others besides.[1] But while he thus built so many fortresses, and doubtless intended to impress the natives with so many visible evidences of his strength, it was not his desire to rule altogether by force. He wished to restrain the predatory instincts of his own countrymen—a task of enormous difficulty ; he wished to stand well in the opinion of the Irish ; and his marriage with Roderick O'Connor's daughter had strengthened his hold on their affections. Once again flatterers and intriguers were at work ; it was represented to Henry that De Lacy was too powerful for a subject ; and moved by that petulant jealousy which he had so often displayed, De Lacy's services were dispensed with (1184), and Philip of Worcester appointed in his place. The change could not be viewed with favour by the Irish, for one of the first acts of the Viceroy was to march northwards and plunder the churches of Armagh.[2]

Some years previous to this date (1177) Henry II. had named his son John, Lord of Ireland. This young man, at the date of De Lacy's dismissal, was eighteen years of age, and his father thought that if he came to Ireland peace would be restored to the land, the natives would recognize him as their ruler, and the chiefs, though hesitating to obey a mere subject, would have no hesitation to submit to the King of England's son. Leaving Pembrokeshire in Easter week (1185), Prince John arrived at Waterford the following day, with a large fleet, having three hundred knights, the usual proportion of horse and foot, and a large retinue, the most remarkable of whom was Gerald De Barri, better known as Giraldus Cambrensis, and who on this occasion acted as John's secretary.[3] Neither as prince nor king was John ever a wise or a good man, and his favourites on this Irish expedition were not unworthy of him. They are described by Giraldus as braggarts and dandies, who swore much and drank much and boasted much. Their desire was to be successful courtiers ; they studied the tastes and foibles of Prince John

[1] Ware's *Annals* ; Cambrensis, p. 291. [2] Cambrensis, p. 107.
[3] *Ibid.* p. 310.

and seconded him in all his follies and debaucheries. With little ability for war, they had the presumption which so often springs from incompetence, criticized with severity the methods of De Lacy and his contemporaries in dealing with the Irish, and boasted that they would soon have the natives finally subdued.[1] On John's arrival the Irish chiefs in the neighbourhood went to meet him, to bid him welcome to Ireland and to proffer their respects and submission to him as their lord. They were entertained at Court, and instead of being honoured, were soon highly offended. The thoughtless crowd who accompanied John laughed at their rude manners, so different from their own mincing courtier ways, jested at their dress and arms, and even pulled their long beards in derision. The Irish chiefs departed bursting with indignation, informed the other chiefs of what treatment they had received, told them that John was but a boy with even more than a boy's levity and folly, and surrounded by others as thoughtless and as foolish as himself. The natives in Leinster and Munster, who had hitherto been faithful to the English, were robbed and pillaged by these new-comers, driven from their lands, and wandering, outcasts and homeless, among their countrymen, excited their sympathy and indignation. The flames of discontent were thus spread far and wide; the Irish chiefs of Cork and Thomond, who had proposed on John's arrival to tender him their submission, suddenly changed their minds, and instead of proceeding to his Court, formed a league against him. While he and his courtiers were wasting their time in idleness and debauchery, the Irish secretly made their preparations; the English were unsuspecting and unprepared, and while they were yet ignorant that the clouds were gathering, the storm had already burst.[2] The strong castles of Ardfinan and Tipperary and Lismore were attacked; the older colonists, such as De Lacy, insulted and outraged as they had been, held aloof, and John and his army were overwhelmed. Ardfinan was taken by Domhnall O'Brien and its garrison put to the sword; Robert De Barri was slain at Lismore, FitzHugh

[1] Cambrensis, p. 320. [2] *Ibid.* p. 316.

at Olechan; the lands and crops of the colonists were wasted and destroyed; cooped up in the towns, decimated by war, famine and disease, John's army was reduced to a pitiable condition, and English power in Ireland was nearly destroyed.[1] To avert still further calamities, John was recalled. He threw the whole blame for these disasters on De Lacy, complained that he would give no help, that he even prevented the Irish princes from paying tribute, and no doubt insinuated also that he even incited them to revolt.[2] With a father's partiality for a favourite son, Henry believed him; De Lacy was deprived of all power in the government of Ireland, though he was still left in possession of his vast estates and was all-powerful in Meath. His career was soon tragically closed. He had seized that part of O'Caharney's territory on which stood the ancient monastery of Durrow, so closely linked with the life of St. Columba,[3] and he had, in addition, used the stones of the venerable ruin for the building of a new feudal castle. As he stood one day surveying the newly-erected building (in the year 1186), an Irishman named O'Meyey stepped behind him, suddenly drew forth a battle-axe, which he had concealed beneath his cloak, and struck off De Lacy's head. O'Meyey, though hotly pursued, escaped. It appears he had been fostered by O'Caharney, in whose province Durrow stood; the affection between the fosterer and the fostered was strong, and O'Meyey wished to be revenged on the despoiler of his chief, at whose instigation, perhaps, he undertook the work of revenge. Some of the Annalists, such as the *Four Masters*, maintain that De Lacy's fate was due to the anger of St. Columba, whose monastery he had destroyed.[4] Whatever the Irish may have thought of De Lacy, and it may be that some of them regretted his fate, it is certain that his master and king, Henry II., did not,

[1] Cambrensis, pp. 313-14; Ware's *Annals*.

[2] Gilbert's *Viceroys*, p. 50.

[3] It appears an ancestor of O'Caharney, or Fox, had given the land on which the monastery stood to St. Columba (*Viceroys*, p. 51).

[4] Ware's *Annals*. De Lacy left two sons, Walter, Lord of Meath, and Hugh, afterwards Earl of Ulster.

and when the news reached him it is on record that he was much pleased.[1]

The English power at the departure of Prince John was in such a perilous position that if it was to be re-established, or even saved from total extinction, the government and defence of the English settlement must be placed in capable and vigorous hands. Just such a man Henry found in De Courcy, whom he appointed Viceroy. This John De Courcy was of good family. His ancestor, Richard De Courcy, had come from Normandy with William the Conqueror, and had received grants of land in England; and John himself had distinguished himself in King Henry's wars both in France and in England. In the pages of Giraldus his picture is complete. He was of fair complexion, tall, muscular, a giant in strength as well as in stature, fond of war, brave, daring, adventurous, with the qualities of a soldier rather than of a commander, miserably parsimonious, in peace sober and modest, and pious in a fashion peculiar to himself, for though he had no scruple about robbing an Irish church, he was, on the other hand, devotedly attached to the churches and the saints of his own Norman race.[2] When FitzAdelm De Burgo became Viceroy (1176) there were many English adventurers in Dublin, who looked with indignation on his pacific policy, and not one was more indignant than De Courcy, who had been appointed to assist him in the government. His passion was for war and adventure, and he chafed under the restraints imposed by the Viceroy. It is claimed for him that he had got a grant of Ulster from Henry II., but details, such as dates, are wanting, and Ware,[3] who gives extracts from the grants of Meath and Leinster made to De Lacy and Strongbow, has none to give in the case of Ulster, nor does it appear how such a grant could have been made; and all that Henry could have done was to give him a *licence to conquer* the Northern province. And this De Courcy determined to do, and for that

[1] Gilbert's *Viceroys*, p. 494; "rex plurimum gavisus est" are the words of the Abbot of Peterborough; and of William of Newbury, "ingenti perfudit laetitia (rex)."

[2] Cambrensis, pp. 277-82.

[3] Harris's *Ware*, vol. ii. p. 197.

purpose gathered together an army of at least 700[1] men, among them being his brother-in-law, Sir Armoric St. Laurence, who had fought with him in all his wars and had a reputation for valour little less than his own. At the head of these followers, all like himself eager for possessions and plunder, De Courcy left Dublin (1177) and hurried northwards to the conquest of Ulster. His meditated incursion and his rapid march through Drogheda and Dundalk were alike unknown to the men of Ulster; and great was the astonishment of the inhabitants of Downpatrick when De Courcy and his men marched into the town, and when the silence of its streets was broken by the tread of armed men and the clamorous notes of the military bugle. The Ulstermen's resistance could only be feeble and futile, and their property, and in many cases their lives, were sacrificed without a blow. Cardinal Vivian, who had come from Rome as Papal Legate, happened to be in Downpatrick on his way to Dublin, and endeavoured to curb the rapacity of the invaders. He offered, on the part of the Ulster chiefs, that they would acknowledge Henry II. as their sovereign, and pay him tribute, if De Courcy and his men would withdraw and return to Dublin. But his efforts were fruitless, and, finding that expostulation and entreaty were vain, he urged the Irish to organize in their own defence.[2] Hastily gathering his forces together, MacDunleavy, prince of Uladh, encountered De Courcy near Downpatrick. His forces were vastly superior—10,000 in number; they were not inferior in valour; but the superior arms and discipline of the English compensated for inferiority of numbers, and after a hard-fought contest the Irish were defeated and the English remained masters of Down. This victory De Courcy followed up by a greater one, on the 24th of June following, in which 1500 of the Irish were slain; the same year he ravaged Tirowen, and in a battle at Dalaraidh defeated the king of that province.[3]

[1] Giraldus only allows him a little more than 300 followers, but the *Book of Howth* (Carew MSS. p. 84) allows that he fought his first battle in Ulster with 700, and the author is De Courcy's enthusiastic eulogist.

[2] Cambrensis, p. 279; Lanigan, vol. iv. pp. 232-3; Lingard, vol. ii. p. 95.

[3] Ware's *Annals*.

His progress was steady and uninterrupted, and before the year had expired he was firmly established at Downpatrick, which he had made his headquarters, and where he had built a strong Norman castle.

The better to encourage his own troops and to strike terror into the natives, he relied on the prophecy of Merlin which foretold that Ulster would be conquered by a white knight, sitting on a white horse, and having the figures of birds graven on his shield—a description strikingly exemplified in De Courcy's case. He also carried round with him a prophecy of St. Columba, which foretold that a needy and broken man, a stranger from far countries, should come to Down with a small following and possess himself of the city;[1] and this description seemed to point to De Courcy. These prophecies of St. Columba were not so well known to be forgeries then as they are now;[2] the name of St. Columba was one to conjure with in his native Ulster; and it may be that many regarded resistance to De Courcy as hopeless, seeing that he was fated to succeed.

But it was not possible to stand idly by while they were being robbed and plundered, nor could it be forgotten that, even if the prophecies had foretold De Courcy's success, they had also contemplated that the natives would resist him. And in the next year they were more successful than they had hitherto been. De Courcy entered Louth, intending to overrun the district, and was met with a stubborn resistance. Near Newry the combined forces of O'Carroll of Oriel and MacDunleavy met him, and he was defeated with the loss of 450 of his army. A little later, in the same year, De Courcy entered the district of Firlee in Antrim, and returning south with a large prey of cattle, he was set on by O'Flynn, the chief of the plundered territory.[3] Encumbered with his prey, his ranks were thrown into confusion, his troops were cut down by the Irish, who had lain in ambush and sprung upon them, and such was the loss he sustained that he escaped to

[1] Cambrensis, pp. 278-80. [2] Reeves' *Adamnan*, Preface.
[3] *Four Masters.*

Downpatrick with only eleven survivors of that fight.[1] Such disasters would have broken the spirit of most men, but De Courcy's spirit was still unbroken. His attenuated ranks were filled by recruits from Dublin, needy, desperate adventurers, who were ready to join in any enterprise, and who in courage and military skill were not unworthy of the leader whom they served. From his central stronghold at Downpatrick he made continuous raids on the neighbouring chiefs and carried on the desultory warfare of a robber chief, rather than any well-defined system of war. A combination of the Ulster chiefs would have crushed him; but neither the lessons of history nor the dictates of prudence or patriotism taught them to combine, and with fatal short-sightedness they carried on their contests with each other as if no invader were in their midst. In the year 1179 the churches of Tirowen, from the mountains southwards, were left desolate in consequence of war and intestine commotion, and Ardstraw and Donaghmore were desolated by the men of Magh-Ithe, and in the following year (1180) there were quarrels between the Clan Dermot and the Cineal-Moen.[2] A little later, the land which had withstood De Courcy was attacked by two Ulster chiefs, for Domhnall O'Loughlin and the Cineal-Eoghan of Tullahoge raided Uladh and defeated MacDunleavy and Cumee O'Flynn; and the men of Magh-Ithe plundered Firlee[3] and carried off many thousands of cows. These wars weakened the native forces; the opportunity was not lost by De Courcy, and that he made progress appears from the fact that an English colony was settled at Dunbo (1182), west of the river Bann in Derry. This colony was attacked by the Cineal-Eoghan, but the Irish were defeated, and three years later (1185) Murtagh O'Loughlin was slain by the English.[4] Invested with the title of Viceroy (1186) as well as Earl of Ulster, De Courcy transferred his residence to Dublin and for nearly three years remained inactive. But his followers in Ulster were not so, and eagerly seized upon any opportunity that presented itself

[1] *Four Masters*; Cambrensis, p. 281.
[2] *Four Masters*.
[3] In Derry, along the valley of the Bann.
[4] *Four Masters*.

to increase their hold on the Northern province. The English of Down,[1] joined by another neighbouring colony of their countrymen, made a raid into Tirowen (1188), and were carrying off a great spoil of cattle; but they were pursued by O'Loughlin and overtaken, and beaten in battle, though O'Loughlin himself was slain. The next year a party of English entered Fermanagh and defeated O'Carroll of Oriel, and O'Mulrony, Lord of Fermanagh; the English were victorious and O'Mulrony was killed.[2]

Henry II. of England died in 1189. His son Richard succeeded to the throne, but the new king paid no attention to Irish affairs. From its petty disputes and provincial wars he turned with contempt, and sought in the Third Crusade a wider field for adventure, and not even the bravest of the Frankish leaders was more feared by the Saracens than was Richard Cœur de Lion. While the English king fought on the sands of Asia or languished in a prison, John had full authority at home; and one of his first acts was to displace De Courcy from the viceroyalty and appoint Hugh De Lacy the younger, son of the first Viceroy, in his stead.[3] The deposed Viceroy took up his headquarters at Downpatrick, married a daughter of Godred, King of Man, and for many years his life was one of danger and hardship, of forays and battles, of victories and defeats. In the Northern province he lived like an independent prince, kept a certain number of soldiers always in his pay, made war and peace on his own initiative, coined money, made grants of land, and all without any pretence of consulting either the English king or his representative at Dublin.[4] His raids on the neighbouring chiefs have not all been recorded, but in the first year of his return to Downpatrick he plundered the churches of Armagh,[5] and it may be assumed that many others of the Northern churches were treated similarly. His progress to the conquest

[1] Of Donaghmore—midway between Newry and Loughbrickland, in the Barony of Upper Iveagh (*Four Masters*).

[2] *Four Masters.*

[3] Gilbert's *Viceroys*, p. 55.

[4] *Ibid.* pp. 59-60.

[5] *Four Masters.*

of all Ulster, or even to the greater part of it, was barred by the ability of some of its chiefs, who, if they could have acted together, would have driven him from the province. But the death of O'Carroll of Oriel, who had been captured by the English, first blinded and then hanged (1193), and in the following year the death of Cumee O'Flynn, De Courcy's old antagonist, removed two of his ablest opponents; and the quarrels between MacDunleavy of Uladh and the chief of Tullahoge (1196) smoothed his path to conquest, and enabled him to acquire territory and build castles in districts which hitherto had not owned his sway. One of these strong castles he built (1197) at Kilsandle, on the east bank of the river Bann, and but a couple of miles from the present town of Coleraine. The governor whom he appointed in charge of this castle—one Russell[1] by name—was of an aggressive disposition, and wishing to extend his power westward, he frequently sallied forth from the castle gates, plundered both the churches and territory of Tirowen, nor did he cease on one of these expeditions until he reached Derry. He was pursued by the prince of Tirconnell and Tirowen, Flaherty O'Muldory, overtaken at a place called Faughanvale, and defeated with the loss of many of his men, among the slain being a Tirowen chief, O'Loughlin, who had deserted to the English and joined in the plundering of his own countrymen. In the same year Flaherty O'Muldory died (1197), and was succeeded in Tirconnell by O'Doherty. De Courcy judged the time propitious for one of his raids, and, mustering an army, entered Tirconnell. He was opposed by O'Doherty, but the Irish were beaten, three hundred of them were killed, O'Doherty himself was slain, Innishowen was left at De Courcy's mercy, and when he had wasted and plundered it, he returned to one of his strong castles. Again, in the following year (1198), he entered Tirowen and continued to ravage and plunder it, until he reached Derry; but its chief, Hugh O'Neill, unable to meet him in the field, effectually retaliated by attacking from the sea the English colonists in Antrim, on whom he inflicted

[1] *Four Masters.* By the *Four Masters* he is called Rotsel Piton.

serious loss.[1] To these evils which had fallen on Tirconnell and Tirowen there was added the further evil of quarrelling among themselves; but though they made war on each other they had the sense, at least for a time, to suspend their quarrels; and when the English made a descent on Tirowen (1199), Hugh O'Neill was able to meet them with large forces, and near Dungannon[2] the invaders were defeated with heavy loss, and those who remained were glad to escape with their lives.

De Lacy the younger had been but three years Viceroy when, like his predecessor De Courcy, he too was removed from office. He retired to his own territory in Meath, which he governed with his own troops, and though, being nearer to Dublin, he was more subject to the authority of the English king, yet in his own territory he could scarcely be distinguished from an independent monarch. Perhaps it was the memory of being once Viceroy and of having lost the favour of a fickle prince that brought De Lacy and De Courcy together, but it is certain that more than once they fought side by side and in a common cause—in 1196 against the English of Leinster and Munster, and a few later years in Connaught.[3] In the interval, Petit and William Marshall, who, as joint Viceroys, succeeded De Lacy, were replaced (1194) by Pipard, and to him succeeded (1197) De Valois and (1199) Meyler FitzHenry,[4] these rapid changes showing that it was difficult to retain the favour of Prince John. By the death of Richard (1199) he became king, and De Lacy, who was something of a courtier, made efforts to ingratiate himself with the new king, nor was he very scrupulous as to the means he employed. Though he had acted sometimes in concert with De Courcy, he appears to have entertained but little regard for him, and was willing to compass his ruin, thinking it might serve his own ends. He represented to King John that De Courcy was disloyal, that he lived and acted as an independent king, and protesting his own

[1] *Four Masters.*

[2] At Donaghmore, three miles from Dungannon (*Four Masters*).

[3] *The O'Conors of Connaught*, p. 81. [4] Gilbert's *Viceroys*, pp. 56-58.

loyalty and personal attachment to his royal master, he was believed and was appointed Viceroy (1203). And as soon as he was installed in his new position, he marched northwards with some troops, proclaimed De Courcy a rebel and a traitor, and having taken him prisoner, sent him under escort to England (1204) to be tried for his misdeeds.[1] De Courcy's estates were then confiscated, and De Lacy himself was made Earl of Ulster.

The subsequent history of De Courcy is unknown, though there were not wanting those who were ready to give it, and with many embellishments, so that his last years might be in keeping with his hitherto eventful career.[2] It was said that he went to the Crusades, where he distinguished himself as few others could have done. It was said that he was restored to all his Irish estates, that he returned to Ireland, and died in Ulster. It was said that he languished in prison in England, until, before an assembly of the French and English kings and the notabilities of both countries, he was brought to take up the challenge of a French knight, whom he frightened out of the lists with one awful glance of his eye. But he was determined to show what he could do with his sword, and taking a piece of timber, he covered it with a helmet and coat of mail, and giving "such a grim look that strange it was to behold," he struck through helmet and coat of mail and embedded his sword so firmly in the timber, that no one could take it out with two hands, though De Courcy took it out with one. And when he was asked why he looked so terrible before he struck with his sword, he answered: "By St. Patrick of Down, if I had missed of this purpose, in striking such a stroke, that I would have slain both you Kings, and so many as I could more, and that you should never report of me anything more; and this for the old sores that I felt at your hands afore, and in defence of

[1] De Courcy was surprised in the church of Down, while performing his devotions on Good Friday. He was unarmed, but snatched the pole of a cross from the head of a grave, and with this killed thirteen of De Lacy's soldiers before he was overpowered (*Viceroys*, p. 62).

[2] *Four Masters*, at the year 1204 (O'Donovan's Note).

this French champion and mine honesty."[1] A little of this may be true; most of it is manifestly false. What is certain is, that he accompanied King John to Ireland (1210), that he once more entered Ulster in that year, that he enjoyed a pension of £100 a year from the English Treasury, and that, after 1210, his name occurs no more in the Irish Annals.[2] He appears to have died without issue, though the De Courcys of Cork claimed descent from him, and as such have claimed the somewhat unmeaning privilege of remaining with their heads covered in the presence of the English king.[3]

[1] This is the account given by the *Book of Howth* (Carew MSS.), pp. 113-14. It is copied by Hanmer, who appears to believe it all (pp. 366 *et seq.*) (*Ancient Irish Histories*, vol. ii.).

[2] Gilbert's *Viceroys*, pp. 72, 500-502.

[3] *Four Masters* (O'Donovan's Note).

CHAPTER XVI

The O'Connors of Connaught

BY the Treaty of Windsor, Roderick O'Connor ceased to be Ardri in the older and more usual sense of the term, or, indeed, in any sense, for outside of his own native province he was destitute of authority. The pre-eminence assigned to him over the other provinces was shadowy and nominal; it was a mere concession to his vanity and pride, and intended, perhaps, to soothe in his adverse fortunes the bitter memories of the fallen monarch. The other native princes were directed to pay through his hands their tribute to the English king, but it does not appear that this provision of the Treaty was insisted on, for the English only wanted the tribute and it mattered little through whose hands it came. Nor would the native princes be likely to voluntarily submit in anything to that king who, almost without a blow, had allowed the sceptre of the High-King of Erin to fall from his nerveless grasp, and whose stupidity and imbecility had made the path of conquest so easy for the invaders. But within his own province of Connaught Roderick's power remained and his position was clear and well defined. The tribute he was to pay to the English king was small, so small that its payment was scarcely felt, and as long as it was paid Roderick might feel secure that, within the limits of his native province, neither native nor English would contest his right to rule. But there were many amongst the invaders who had not yet acquired those possessions which they so greedily sought. De Lacy had got Meath, Strongbow had got Leinster, De Courcy was hastening to the invasion and, as he hoped, to the conquest of Ulster, and some of his compatriots at Dublin asked themselves—Why

should not Connaught also become the prey of some successful adventurer? It does not appear that Roderick had violated any of his engagements with Henry II.; his kingdom of Connaught had been guaranteed him as long as he faithfully served that king (*quamdiu ei fideliter serviet*),[1] and there is no evidence that in any sense he had been unfaithful. Yet, in the face of these facts, the invasion of Connaught was resolved upon. A rebellious and unnatural son of Roderick—Morrogh by name—had quarrelled with his father; in his chagrin he had hastened to the English at Dublin and asked their assistance, and this was the pretext for the invasion. Their hope was that when the O'Connors were fighting among themselves little resistance could be offered them and the province would easily become their prey.

With the consent of the Viceroy an army of 500[2] was collected, and with Milo De Cogan at their head these troops marched to the conquest of the Western province. Milo was a tried and trained soldier, his abilities for command had been already proved at Dublin and elsewhere, and at the head of such troops as he commanded he believed that Connaught could be won. Cardinal Vivian had just presided (1177) at a Synod at Dublin, and had published Adrian's Bull and commanded, through the bishops and abbots present, that the Irish should submit to Henry II., and this under threat of excommunication. The Irish in their wars with the English had been accustomed to store their provisions in the churches, so that within their consecrated walls their goods would escape the rapacity of the strangers. Vivian condemned the custom —and it must be owned that a church filled with corn and hay was little like what a church should be, and ill-suited for the service of God—and he allowed the English in their wars to enter the churches and take what provisions they required, stipulating that they should compensate the owners for what they took.[3] These proceedings were very welcome to De Cogan and

[1] Cox, *Hibernia Anglicana*, pp. 29-30, where the Treaty is given in full, in the original Latin.

[2] Cambrensis, p. 283.

[3] *Ibid.* p. 282; Lanigan, vol. iv. p. 233.

his troops. They had taken little provisions with them when leaving Dublin; they relied on obtaining plenty in Connaught, for, if the fields and even the houses were found to be empty, the churches at least would be full. But it was not Vivian's object to make it easy for the English to replenish their exhausted supplies at the expense of the Irish; it was rather to prevent the churches from being turned into granaries and diverted from the sacred purposes for which they had been built. And when De Cogan and his troops crossed the Shannon at Athlone, they found the churches empty,[1] the villages deserted, the fields swept bare; the people had retired into the shelter and solitude of the woods; and on his journey westwards to Tuam, De Cogan passed through a deserted land. Nor could he find at Tuam, where he remained for eight days, either provisions or people, for that town also had been deserted; and without an enemy to fight or food to obtain, De Cogan commenced his retreat back to Dublin. The Irish troops, who had hitherto remained concealed, now became visible and harassed the retreating army. At Ballymoe they attacked them in force, and though the English cut their way through, their loss was heavy. They were still pursued until they finally left the province; and when they reached the other side of the Shannon, greatly reduced in numbers, depressed in spirits, weak, way-worn and hungry, they bore but little resemblance to that army of 500 men who, but a fortnight before, had crossed the Shannon and were marching to the conquest of Connaught. Among the prisoners taken by the Irish was the traitor Murrogh O'Connor, and with the full consent of his father his eyes were put out, as the just punishment of his treason.[2]

In his desertion to the English, Murrogh O'Connor had got no support in Connaught; chiefs and people had held aloof from him, and to this is largely, if not entirely, due the success that followed. The Connaughtmen had been taught how much

[1] Giraldus says they took down the crucifixes and images of the Saints from the church walls and threw them before the English, so that the vengeance of God might fall upon them.

[2] *The O'Conors of Connaught*, p. 74.

unity and determination could accomplish; the English had been also taught a much-needed lesson, and when Henry II., in defiance of all treaty engagements, granted all Connaught to De Burgo, that noble shrank from attempting the conquest of the province. But the unity of the Connaughtmen did not last; neither did the O'Connors remain at peace with the other native chiefs. A quarrel arose between the son of Roderick —Connor Moinmoy—and Connor O'Kelly, chief of Hy-Many, and a battle was fought (1180), called the "battle of the Connors," in which the losses were heavy on both sides, Connor O'Kelly and many of the chiefs of Hy-Many being among the slain.[1] The next year Connaught and Tirconnell went to war, and in the battle which ensued the Connaught forces were beaten, with the loss of a large portion of their army. Concurrently with these events there was war in Munster between Desmond and Thomond (1178), when the whole country was laid waste from Limerick to Cork. A little later (1182), Milo De Cogan was killed. Jointly with Robert Fitzstephen he had been granted by Henry II. that part of the kingdom of Desmond westward from Lismore and southward to the city of Cork and the sea, the city itself having been especially reserved to the King and garrisoned by royal troops. Either unable or unwilling to contest Henry's grant, Diarmuid MacCarthy, King of Desmond, allowed these two knights to occupy the lands named and to divide them, De Cogan's share being that nearest to the city of Cork. For five years he enjoyed his territory in peace, but on one occasion, as he journeyed to Waterford, he was set upon by a native chief—MacTyre—and murdered.[2] His death encouraged the natives to take up arms; something like unity was temporarily established among them, and the power of the English in Cork and its neighbourhood was nearly destroyed. But this unity was soon followed by division, and both in Munster and Connaught almost every year some fresh quarrel arose which resulted in war.

For years before his death the life of Henry II. had been

[1] *Annals of Loch Cé.* [2] Cambrensis, pp. 283-6.

made miserable, and at length his heart was broken by the conduct of his children. It was the fate of Roderick O'Connor to have equally rebellious sons. His son Murrogh had brought the invaders into Connaught; he failed and was punished. His failure and punishment did not deter his brother, Connor Moinmoy, from being equally disrespectful to his father; but at least Connor had no desire to see his native province in chains, and perhaps it was because he felt that his father was unable to defend it that he wished to depose him. To purchase peace, even for a little, Roderick entered the monastery of Cong (1183); but the life of a monastery soon ceased to have attractions for him, and he left Cong (1185). As Connor Moinmoy refused to surrender the throne to him, Roderick proceeded to Munster, obtained the assistance of Domhnall O'Brien, and at the head of an army desolated the west of Connaught—both churches and territory. Peace was then made. Connaught was divided between father and son; but they soon quarrelled, and Connor drove his father into exile (1186), into Munster.[1]

Armed with the resources of the Viceroy, and judging that the late wars had weakened it, De Courcy believed (1188) that the moment was opportune for an invasion of Connaught, and that at last that stubborn province would be subdued.[2] He estimated that not only was its own strength exhausted, but he felt sure no help would come from Thomond, with which province it had so lately fought. His expectations were falsified. O'Brien had fought the Connaughtmen, and even employed English mercenaries for the purpose, but he felt that the subjugation of Connaught by the English would be but the prelude to the conquest of Thomond. For a similar reason, Flaherty O'Muldory of Tirconnell came to the aid of the threatened province; and when De Courcy entered Connaught, and, proceeding westwards, was robbing and

[1] *Four Masters*; *Annals of Loch Cé.*

[2] As usual, he was invited by a native prince, Connor MacDermot (*Four Masters*). The *Annals of Loch Cé* adds that he was accompanied by Roderick O'Connor.

plundering on his march, he learned with dismay that the united forces of Connaught and Thomond were approaching fast. Before this combination he judged it wise to fall back, and turning north he passed through Sligo to Ballysodare, intending to go still farther and enter Tirconnell. Here he was confronted by a strong force under O'Muldory, who had advanced rapidly from Drumcliff, and, burning Ballysodare, De Courcy turned eastwards. Passing over the Curlew Mountains, he encountered the forces of Thomond and Connaught; at every step his men were cut down, and by the time he reached Leinster, of that army which was to have conquered Connaught but few remained, while Connaught was still triumphant and unsubdued.[1]

At this period it was evident that Connaught had at last an able and vigorous chief, that the sceptre of Roderick had fallen into worthier hands, and that the prospect before the province was that its interests would be safeguarded against either foreign or domestic foe. But treachery was again at work, and in the following year Moinmoy was assassinated by a man of his own tribe, instigated by Connor's own brother. Once again the way was ready for domestic strife and the flames of war were kindled. The vacant throne was contended for by Cathal Carragh and Cathal Crovderg,[2] the former being son of the murdered king, the latter a younger son of the great Turlogh O'Connor, and therefore a younger brother of Roderick. To add to the confusion, Roderick himself once more claimed the throne. Pity for the fallen monarch and attachment to a venerated name induced some few clans to tender him their allegiance, but these clans were few and powerless.[3] The times required a strong hand at the helm; the enemies of Connaught were many; and he was ill-suited to be its king who had never

[1] *Four Masters*; *Annals of Loch Cé.*

[2] Put in English, Cathal Crovderg means Charles of the Red Hand, and the tradition was, that his red hand was caused by a sorceress at the time of his birth. He was the illegitimate son of Turlogh O'Connor by a girl named Moran, from the district of Umhall in Mayo (*Four Masters*, anno 1224).

[3] *Four Masters*, 1189.

shown capacity even in youth, and to whose natural feebleness of character there had been superadded the feebleness of old age. Nor did he obtain help from the chief of Tirconnell, to whom he appealed (1191),[1] for that chief remembered that it was his lack of vigour and energy that had facilitated the English conquest of Ireland, and brought the miseries of foreign invasion not only to Connaught, but to Tirconnell. He made a similar request to Tirowen ; he even appealed to the English of Meath ; but everywhere he was repulsed—nobody, English or Irish, wished to see him on the throne ; and, disappointed and disgusted, he retired to Cong, where he remained until his death. But meantime the struggle was continued between Cathal Carragh and Cathal Crovderg. To prevent the effusion of blood between relatives, and to save Connaught from the horrors of civil war, a conference was arranged at Clonfert in Galway, which was attended by both claimants to the throne. But even the influence of the Primate of Armagh,[2] who was present at their meeting, was unable to make peace ; they could not be reconciled ; they parted, determined to continue the war ; and for a time Cathal Carragh triumphed and reigned, while Crovderg had to be satisfied with a subordinate position. It was during this period the English of Leinster entered Thomond and plundered it as far as Killaloe. They were met by Domhnall O'Brien, who defeated them, pursued them into Ossory, and inflicted a second defeat on them at Thurles. Two years later (1194) he died, and the English could rejoice at the disappearance of the ablest and the most persevering of their foes.[3]

Cathal Crovderg, who had remained quiet for some time, again became restless, and making an alliance with the English and Irish of Meath, he marched into Munster (1195), where he burned several castles and took possession of Emly and Cashel. In his absence, a Connaught chief—apparently exiled

[1] *Four Masters* ; *Loch Cé.*

[2] His name was Tomaltagh or Thomas O'Connor. He was a relative of these princes ; he died in 1201 (Ware's *Bishops*).

[3] *Four Masters*, 1192-1194.

in Munster—Cathal MacDermot, got together some forces, attacked Crovderg's possessions in Connaught and seized his vessels on Lough Mask, and plundered the neighbouring people, proceedings which compelled Crovderg to return from Munster, when he made peace with MacDermot, and shortly after with O'Flaherty of West Connaught (1197), who had made some attack on him. During these years there were no quarrels, at least no battles, between Cathal Carragh and Cathal Crovderg, and when Roderick died at Cong (1198) it seemed as if they were about to be permanently reconciled and make peace over his freshly-closed grave. But in the next year the quarrel was renewed, and as Cathal Carragh proved the stronger, he drove Crovderg from the province. In this the latter did not quietly acquiesce, and making his way to Tirowen, he obtained the aid of its chief—Hugh O'Neill—and the men of Oriel. Cathal Carragh, with the assistance of De Burgo and the English of Limerick, met them at Ballysodare in Sligo, and Crovderg and his Northern allies were defeated. In this expedition the ravages perpetrated by the army of Cathal Carragh and De Burgo were more than usually severe. From the Shannon westwards to the sea they pillaged and destroyed everything, so that neither church, nor altar, nor priest, nor monk, nor canon, nor abbot, nor bishop afforded protection against them, and they stripped the priests in the churches and carried off the women, so that never before was Connaught so afflicted.[1] Determined even yet to prevail, Crovderg obtained the aid of De Courcy and De Lacy, and with these again entered Connaught and advanced as far as Kilmacduagh, where they were met and again defeated by Cathal Carragh. With the loss of three battalions out of five, the English retreated towards the Shannon, and at Rindown, on the shores of Lough Ree, they were embarking for the other side when the forces of Cathal Carragh again overtook them.[2] Those that had crossed were unable to help those on the other side; these latter were hemmed in and taken at a disadvantage—unprepared for the attack and dispirited by recent defeat, their resistance was

[1] *Annals of Loch Cé*, 1200. [2] *Four Masters*, 1199.

feeble. Many were slain, many were drowned, few escaped, and the English were once again taught that Connaught was not a safe place to invade. Even yet, Crovderg would not acknowledge himself beaten, and two years later the fight for supremacy was renewed. On this occasion De Burgo was his ally, showing the readiness with which in these contests the English as well as the Irish changed sides. Perhaps De Burgo had some reason to think that Crovderg was at last about to triumph and he wished to be on the side of success, or perhaps it was because his soldiers were promised higher pay. The invading army entered Connaught, and passing through Tuam and Oran in Roscommon, established their headquarters at the monastery of Boyle. Their conduct was in keeping with the worst traditions of a mercenary army. They defiled the whole monastery—turned the monks out of their cells, left them only their dormitories and the house of the novices, and in the cloisters and in the hospital, and even in the church, there were enacted scenes of gross and shameful immorality, of which even savages might be ashamed. Cathal Carragh with his Connaught-men marched to meet his new foes, and while the two armies stood facing each other, he went to see some skirmishing which was taking place, and getting mixed up with the combatants on his own side, he was killed.[1]

With his death the long contest for supremacy was ended (1201) and Crovderg was at last King of Connaught. In company with his ally, De Burgo, he marched westward and spent the Easter at Cong. Such an army as theirs, flushed with success, feeling that they were passing through a conquered district, must have perpetrated many evils on the natives, and invited that terrible retribution with which they were soon overtaken. Having no money with which to pay these English mercenaries, Crovderg, by agreement with De Burgo, had them billeted through Connaught, promising that after a time their wages would be paid. The conduct of mercenary soldiers in a land which has been conquered by their arms is rarely anything but trying to the people among whom they live, and those

[1] *Annals of Loch Cé*, 1202; *Four Masters*, 1201.

soldiers had already shocked and disgusted the Connaughtmen. Their punishment was swift and terrible. A report spread throughout the province, and was everywhere credited, that De Burgo had suddenly died; and, as if by mutual agreement, though it appears it was nothing but sudden impulse, the natives fell with fury on the soldiers quartered in their midst, and in one awful night of retribution and murder 900 English soldiers were butchered in cold blood.[1] De Burgo retired to Limerick, and the next year (1203), aided by the English of Munster and Meath, he entered Connaught, wasted the country through which he passed, desecrated and robbed the monasteries of Clonfert and Clonmacnoise, and for the first time established some settlements in the province and erected some strong castles.[2] A year later, he continued his career of desecration and plunder, and the churches of Tuam, Kilbannon, Mayo, Cong, Boyle, Elphin and many others suffered at his hands. In that year (1204) he died rather suddenly of a loathsome disease, it was said, and the Annalists attributed his sudden death and the disgusting disease from which he died to the wrath of the Saints whose churches he had desecrated or destroyed.[3]

Without a rival in Connaught, or a powerful enemy such as De Burgo to contend with, Crovderg was able to assert his authority over the whole province, and when Hugh O'Flaherty of West Connaught proved troublesome and rebellious, he deprived him of his territory (1207) and gave it to his own son, Hugh O'Connor. But it was difficult to keep these turbulent Connaught chiefs within bounds, and the same year a quarrel arose and a battle was fought between MacDermot and O'Mulroony, and when King John came to Ireland (1210), Crovderg went to his Court and made formal submission to him as his superior lord, on which occasion it is said that he surrendered two-thirds of Connaught, keeping only one-third for himself, and for this portion he was to pay 100 marks

[1] *Annals of Loch Cé*, 1202. The *Four Masters* makes the number killed (anno 1201) to be only 700. [2] *Ibid.*

[3] *Annals of Loch Cé*; *Annals of Clonmacnoise.*

yearly.[1] At a later date (1219) an attempt was made by Richard De Burgo to obtain a grant of all Connaught, but it does not appear that this application was acceded to, and when De Lacy of Meath crossed the Shannon (1220) and sought to effect a settlement in the Western province, he was met by Cathal Crovderg and vigorously repelled, and the English castle erected was destroyed, so that till his death he was able to keep all his enemies at bay. In the last years of his life he retired to the abbey of Knockmoy in Galway, which he himself had founded (1189) to commemorate one of his victories,[2] and there, amid the prayers and piety of the Cistercian monks, he found rest after so much toil and peace after so many battles. His death occurred in 1224. It may be truthfully declared of him that he was one of the ablest of the O'Connor princes, and in contrasting him with his brother Roderick the regret must always be felt that it was not the younger brother who was Ardri during those critical times when the Anglo-Normans first came.

[1] Leland, vol. i. p. 175. This statement is contradicted, and I think satisfactorily disproved, by O'Conor Don (*The O'Conors of Connaught*, pp. 85-87). Crovderg is indeed under the King's protection, yet in the State Papers he is recognized as King of Connaught, and a record is in existence (in the year 1215) by which King John grants *all Connaught* to Crovderg, saving only the Castle of Athlone.

[2] It was called the Abbey of the Hill of Victory (*Collis Victoriae*), and O'Conor Don states that the victory was gained over the English (*The O'Conors*, p. 92); but O'Donovan (*Four Masters*, 1224) could not discover when the battle was fought, or where, or against whom.

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